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THE LIFE OF W. T. STEAD

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W. T. STEAD IN 1889

From a photograph by the London Stereoscopic Co.

THE LIFE OF W. T. STEAD

BY

FREDERIC WHYTE

IN TWO VOLUMES

Vol. I

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to

MY FRIEND

DANIEL O'CONNOR

PREFACE

My cordial thanks are due to Miss E. Hetherington, a confidential assistant to W. T. Stead from the early days of the *Review of Reviews* down to the time of his death, for much valuable help, especially in 'sorting out' the mass of correspondence, press-cuttings, private memoranda, and documents of every description, placed by Mrs. and Miss Stead at my disposal for the purposes of this work.

To Mr. E. H. Stout, whose association with Mr. Stead began so far back as 1883, I am also deeply indebted, as may be seen from the frequent mention of his name in different parts of the book. Many other acknowledgments will be found in the pages which follow. Here I would only add these lines to express my gratitude to three of Mr. Stead's friends whose appreciation has encouraged me immensely: to Lord Milner, who read about half of the book in typescript more than two years ago; to Mr. A. G. Gardiner, who has read the whole of it; and to the late H. W. Massingham, who, not long before his death, was also kind enough to look through the complete typescript. In conclusion, I must thank my cousin, W. de Burgh Whyte, for very welcome help in the correcting of the proofs.

F. W.

April 1925

CHAPTER 1

EARLY DAYS

WITH a skilful as well as a loving hand, Miss Estelle Stead gives us in the brief memoir entitled 'My Father,' published in 1913, a very full and complete account of William Thomas Stead's boyhood and youth and early manhood from his birth on July 5, 1849, at Embleton, near Alnwick, in Northumberland, 'in the little manse under the Northern hills,' down to the beginning of his career in London, in October 1880. Partly because the first half of his life has been thus covered so well, partly because the second half is so crowded with incidents and so extraordinarily interesting that one needs as much space for it as possible, comparatively few pages will be devoted here to those early days in the North.

It would be amusing to be able to point to a streak of Berserker blood in the ancestry of a man so combative and adventurous as W. T. Stead, and, as it happens, some one has attempted to make out that the Stead family, like so many north-country families, was in truth of Scandinavian origin. No trustworthy evidence in favour of this contention, however, has as yet been produced, and for our present purposes it will suffice to go back only three generations. W. T. Stead's parents were both of north-country stock. His mother, Isabella, was the daughter of Mr. John Jobson, farmer, of Sturton Grange, near Warkworth. His father, the Rev. William Stead, a Congregational Minister, was the son of one Thomas Stead, also married to the daughter of a Yorkshire farmer – 'of the parish of Bradfield'; while this Thomas Stead's father had himself had a farm near Addingham, in Wharfedale, in the West Riding, but, having met with reverses, he removed to the village of Crooks, about a mile from Sheffield, where he died.

W. T. Stead was devoted to the memory of both his parents. Miss Estelle Stead, drawing largely on her father's reminiscences of childhood as written down in 1893, has been able to depict vividly and movingly the singularly happy home life of the family, first at Embleton Manse and later at Howden, about five miles from Newcastle, on the north bank of the Tyne. Mrs. Stead seems to have been a quite perfect mother to her many children. One who knew her intimately, and also the boy who was to become so famous, thus sums up her life: 'A life very simple, very placid in its "deeds of weekday holiness," yet most powerful in its shaping influence upon the fiery, ardent nature of her son.'

Of his father, W. T. Stead at various dates wrote several glowingly affectionate descriptions. Miss Stead has transcribed almost in full the longest of these, first published in 1884, just after the old Minister's death, and reprinted in the *Review of Reviews* in January 1908, in an article entitled 'My Father and My Son,' occasioned by the early death of his beloved eldest son, 'Will.' Here is a much briefer sketch, penned in 1906: it formed the opening paragraph of a series of contributions which he undertook that year for the well-known American periodical, *The Christian Endeavour World*, and which appeared under the heading, 'The Most Interesting Men I ever Met':

'The most interesting man I ever met, if by that is meant the man in all the world who most interested me, was my own father. He was not merely my father. He was my teacher, my story-teller, my universal encyclopædia of knowledge and my greatest playmate. Since I laid his worn-out body to rest in the cemetery I have seen many famous men whose names are familiar as household words in the ears of the human race, but no one was ever to me so interesting as my father. He was a retiring village pastor of a small Congregational Church in the north of England. His stipend never exceeded £150 a year, and when I was born it stood at £80. We were a large family and it was no easy task to make both ends meet. So I learned my lessons on my father's knee. Until I was twelve I had no other schoolmaster, and I may almost say no other playmate – save my sister. I often say that all I know of the world and the fundamental principles of the government of men and the methods of the Church, I learned from his teaching, as it was day by day exemplified and illustrated in the unceasing labour of the pastorate. The wider experience of my subsequent life only enabled me to verify and apply what I learned from him. He held for me the keys of the book of knowledge, in which he constantly spurred me on to study. He was to me in those early days not one, but all mankind's epitome, and I rejoice to have an opportunity in these articles of paying him the grateful tribute of filial love in declaring in all sincerity that to me he was and ever will be the most interesting man I ever met.'[1]

---

[1] The article proceeds to deal with General Gordon. The second article in the series dealt with Tolstoi.

From this ideal father the clever pupil learnt Latin almost as soon as he could read, and before he was five he was deep in the Old Testament. One particularly useful habit which his father developed in him was that of remembering all the leading points of lectures and sermons, and of repeating them correctly when he returned home – a faculty afterwards invaluable to him. This paternal education continued until 1861, when the boy went to Silcoates School, near Wakefield. At Silcoates, during the two years he spent there, he had his first experience of a religious 'revival' – a phenomenon which was to arouse his deep interest again in later life. Nearly all the boys claimed to have been 'converted.' Young Stead, as can well be imagined, was one of those who took infection most swiftly and completely. It led to his formally joining the Congregational Church – the Church of which his father was a Minister. In the Congregationalists, though he was often to differ from many individuals among them, he never ceased to recognize 'the heirs of Cromwell and Milton and the Pilgrim Fathers, and the representatives of that extreme Democracy which knows neither male nor female, and which makes the votes of the whole Church the supreme and only authority in the Church.' But while cultivating religion he did not neglect games; and as the boys were left very much to themselves he learnt also the principles of self-government. 'So that,' to cite his own words, 'I may be said to have acquired three very important things at school, none of which were in the curriculum, viz., Christianity, Cricket and Democracy.'

Silcoates appears to have been an excellent school in every way, but Stead tells us he was not happy there at first. He had, he says, two consolations only as a 'new boy.' The first was in receiving letters from home.

> 'My other consolation (he says) was the Bible. I had, of course, been brought up to regard the Holy Scriptures with profound reverence. It was the very word of God. Morning and evening it was read with due solemnity at family worship, and every day on which we did not read privately at least one chapter was a day that seemed under the shadow of the wrath of a neglected God. But the Bible, as a human help, never came home to me until I was sent away from home. In my lonely desolate days I remember turning to its pages more from a feeling that it came from the old home than for any reason. I stumbled, I know not how, upon the Psalms. I can never

forget the feeling of awe and delight with which I read verse after verse full of comfort, of consolation, of encouragement, and of love. Henry Ward Beecher once very truly said that men never learn to appreciate the Bible till they are in trouble. But he said when a man in sore distress goes to the Bible, he comes out with texts sticking to his memory as burrs stick to his coat when he has been in a burr-bush. I was not, as might be imagined, a very systematic reader. I picked my way about the Psalms as cattle browse in a meadow, picking out all the toothsome, tender young shoots of grass. I took what I needed. I hugged the promises, and I was greatly comforted.'[1]

Later he enjoyed life quite well, largely owing to his affection for the head master, Dr. Bewglass, whom he thus portrays:

'We all liked the Doctor. I adored him, and I think that nothing he taught us in school was worth so much to me in after-life as the benefit accruing from getting to know such a man and to love him. You never really know the best of anybody till you love them; and I worshipped the Doctor. He was so hale and sound and manly, full of a kindly humour with a merry twinkle in his blue-grey eye. He was an Irishman whose whole soul blazed up in divine fury against meanness or cruelty or falsehood in any shape or form. Yet during my two years I think he only flogged me once – for what offence I cannot exactly remember. He was of all men I ever met the most uncompromising democrat, the most genial optimist. A head master is by position an autocrat. But this autocrat made his school a republic. We were left to do almost exactly as we pleased, within bounds. We were always upon honour. He trusted us so implicitly, it seemed a shame to deceive him. Whenever he could, he always left decisions to a vote of the boys of the class. The good conduct prize was always awarded by plebiscite of all the scholars voting by ballot, and I must say that the choice was almost always in accordance with the judgment of the masters, although they never interfered in any way with the voting. In class, when there was a question as to which of two or three books should be studied, the Doctor usually left it to the boys in the class to decide which book should be taken. In the playground we were left absolutely free to play or not to play, without any supervision. It was a free Republic, and among

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[1] These two passages are from a contribution by W. T. Stead to the *Silcoates School Magazine* for October 1900.

THE HOUSE (to the left) AT HOWDEN-ON-TYNE WHERE W. T. STEAD SPENT HIS BOYHOOD

THE MANSE AT EMBLETON WHERE W. T. STEAD WAS BORN

From a photograph by T. S. Laidler.

the best things I learned at Silcoates was the principle that the best of all government is government by all.'

An 'old Silcoatian,' writing in the *Silcoates School Magazine* in 1900, thus records his memories of both Stead and Dr. Bewglass:

> 'While always fond of a harmless lark, at school he (Stead) was distinguished more perhaps for straightforwardness than for anything else. Soon a general favourite, and good all-round cricketer, he wrote for the 1863 "Annual," on the "Ministers *v.* Laymen" match of the season, a poetic effusion hitting off the strong and weak points of the school's crack cricketers. His two years at Silcoates left their mark on his life. Like most notable men, he had a splendid mother, and to her and to Dr. Bewglass he largely attributes the formation of his character. From him he learnt the great lessons of true manliness and faith in the democracy. The Doctor stimulated his taste for reading, and particularly poetry. The political creed of the future editor was largely moulded in the Doctor's classes and noon-day walks. How well I remember, in the further class-room over "Betty Dunnell's" out-house, Dr. Bewglass's lessons in "geography" (quite as much lessons in history, politics, and morals) as, from week to week he traced the course of Sherman, Sheridan, and Grant across the map of the United States. How his poetic declamations roused in us the love of the romantic and beautiful! How at his graver stories our blood tingled! How his gay ones inspired our cunning to trap him into telling more, and yet more! How his eyes flashed and his face glowed as he taught us to hate the wrong, to love the right, and defend it at all cost! What a prince and maker of men he was, and how greatly through Stead and many others, he influences the world to-day!'

In June 1863 young William left Silcoates and was apprenticed office-boy in a merchant's counting house on Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne, at the age of fourteen. His employer being also Russian Vice-Consul, he thus came into early touch with the country whose fortunes were to play so large a part in his journalistic career.

Even before going to school the boy had become enthusiastically devoted to Scott and Byron. Now, after a brief period of absorption in novels and the *Sporting Life* with its cricket and racing news, he began to get, one by one, all the numbers of Dick's Penny Shakespeare and to read them with delight. Soon he developed into a genuine book-lover, reading everything he could lay his hands on.

Carlyle's *Life of Cromwell* impressed him immensely[1] and led indirectly to his acquaintance with the writer who perhaps more than any other was to influence his whole life. It impelled him into composing an essay upon Cromwell which won him the prize in a competition in the *Boys' Own Magazine*; the prize was one guinea, to be taken out in books published by the proprietor of the magazine: 'I remember,' Stead wrote in later years, 'as if it were yesterday, carefully going through the little catalogue. . . . After selecting books valued at twenty shillings, I chose the *Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell* to make up the guinea. That little volume, with its green paper cover, lies before me now, thumbed almost to pieces, underscored and marked in the margin throughout. . . . With the exception of the little copy of Thomas à Kempis which General Gordon gave to me as he was starting for Khartoum, it is the most precious of all my books. It has been with me everywhere. In Russia, in Ireland, in Rome, in Prison, it has been a constant companion.'

The volume did not include the 'Biglow Papers,' but it contained most of Russell Lowell's best-known poems, among them 'Extreme Unction.' The reading of this poem came to be viewed by W. T. Stead as an epoch-making event in his existence:

'It is only a short poem, eleven verses in all' (he says in an article entitled 'Books which have Influenced Me,' which he contributed in

---

[1] 'The memory of Cromwell' (Stead wrote in 1899) 'has from my earliest boyhood been the inspiration of my life. That was not surprising, for I was the son of an independent minister; as Southey noted with amazement and disgust, the cult of the Lord Protector has always been a note of the genuine Independent. To say that he ranked far and away before all the saints in the calendar, was to say nothing. My devotion to the Apostles and the Evangelists was but tepid compared with my veneration and affection for the uncrowned king of English Puritanism. Nay, I can to this day remember the serious searchings of heart I experienced when I woke up to a consciousness of the fact that I felt a far keener and more passionate personal love for Oliver Cromwell, than I did even for the divine figure of Jesus of Nazareth. Cromwell was so near, so human, and so real. And above all, he was still the mark for hatred, scoffing and abuse. You never really love anyone to the uttermost until you feel that other people hate him and misjudge him, and the conventional reverence with which Christendom spoke of the founder of Christianity concealed from the lad in his teens the persistence of the continuing Passion and Crucifixion of our Lord. Hence, the things others found in Cromwell most blameworthy became to me, by the natural process common to all who defend with a whole heart one whom they love, more praiseworthy than the best of actions of his foes. The execution of the Man of Blood made the 30th of January a red-letter day in my calendar, and to this day I feel a thrill of gratitude and pride whenever I pass the banqueting house at Whitehall.'

1887 to the *British Weekly*), 'but I think it made a deeper dint on my life than any other printed matter I ever read, before or since. A rich old man to whom the last sacraments of the church are about to be administered, repels the priest and dies in despair. It is very simple, and it seems strange that I, who was neither old, nor rich, nor at the point of death, should have been so affected by it. But the fact was so, nevertheless. I was in very ill-health at the time I read it, and was full of the enthusiasm of youth, intensified by a stimulating sense of ever-present duty derived from the Commonwealth. Here are a few of the stanzas, which clung to me like burrs, haunting me by night and day:

'On this bowed head the awful Past
   Once laid its consecrating hands;
The Future in its purpose vast
   Paused, waiting my supreme commands.

* * *

'God bends from out the deep and says,
   "I gave thee the great gift of life;
Wast thou not called in many ways?
   Are not my earth and heaven at strife?"

* * *

'Now here I gasp; what lose my kind
   When this fast-ebbing breath shall part?
What bands of love and service bind
   This being to the world's sad heart?

* * *

'I hear the reapers singing go
   Into God's harvest; I that might
With them have chosen, here below
   Grope shuddering at the gates of night.

'Of these lines, the question, "What bands of love and service bind This being to the world's sad heart?" stung me like a spur of fire; to-day, after the lapse of twenty years, they have not lost their propelling force. There were others of Russell Lowell's poems which helped to give a shape to my life. There is "A Parable," with its teaching that the artisan, the low-browed, stunted, haggard man, and the motherless girl, whose fingers thin, Push from her faintly want and sin, are the images which Society is fashioning of the Christ which it professed to adore. And there is the familiar stanza :

'He's true to God who's true to man, wherever wrong is done
To the humblest, to the weakest, 'neath the all-beholding sun.
That wrong is also done to us, and they are slaves most base,
Whose love of right is for themselves, and not for all their race.

'Under the stimulus of these ideas I ceased to dream of writing, and devoted myself to night-school work, teaching, and other methods of directly serving the ignorant, the poor and those who needed help. Little as I anticipated it at the time, it was this abandonment of literary day-dreams which ultimately opened to me a journalistic career. My introduction to newspapers was due entirely to a desire to establish charity organization societies in the North of England. I, agitating the subject, found newspaper help indispensable. I first wrote to the editor, and then volunteered editorials on the subject.'

Stead is alluding here to his contributions to the *Northern Echo* of Darlington (of which more presently), but his first crusading effort in print would seem to have been in a local journal. The story of it is thus told by an old friend of his, the Rev. W. C. Chisholm:[1]

'At the back of his father's church at Howden-on-Tyne there was a notorious slum which, in spite of their attention having been directed to it frequently, the Local Board would do nothing to improve. Young Stead, full of enthusiasm and "go," and eager to get rid of a crying nuisance and scandal, determined to do what he could to force the hands of the unwilling Board. So he wrote his letter – a red-hot stinging letter – which, to his surprise and delight, duly appeared as a leading article in the local paper. It set the ball rolling. People began to talk about it, and, what was more, were stimulated by it to take an active interest in the question raised. Public opinion at Howden soon was too strong for the Local Board, who were forced to move, and the slum was reformed. Such was the occasion of Mr. Stead's first communication to the Press; his first public attempt to "get things done."'

There is not much else that need be said about young William Stead's Newcastle life down to February 1870, when his connection with the *Northern Echo* opened out new visions for him. We can picture him, a sparely built, rather pallid youth, with nothing very notable about his appearance except his wide-open steel-blue eyes and the abundance of his brown hair, sitting at his office desk, absorbed in invoices of timber, wine and spirits, in ship insurances and brokerage, and in his employer's official correspondence as Russian Vice-Consul; eating at midday 'the half of a threepenny loaf and a cold chop' he brought in his mother's parcel, reading at the same time Scott, Spurgeon and the Bible or his Shakespeare or Lowell or Carlyle. It is from a little biographical sketch by his friend, Mr. Benjamin Waugh,[1] that we get these details. A letter to the editor of the *Northern Echo* will show us presently something of his endless occupations as a social worker out of office hours. He was accounted a strange youth by most of his Newcastle and Howden acquaintances, by reason of his feverish ardour over everything – it was characteristic of him that he preferred always to run than to walk – and of his multiform interests and enthusiasms. 'Nobody in Howden wonders that William Stead has done strange things,' remarked one who knew him then, in conversation with Mr. Waugh, 'but they would all wonder if he ever did anything that was ungenerous or unkind.'

---

[1] *The Christian Realm*, January 1904.

Two stories of Stead's boyhood, told by Mr. Waugh, must not be passed over, although they have been often repeated since. They are significant stories, both of them, foreshadowing the future: the story of how, as quite a tiny little fellow, he once exclaimed, on hearing of some evil deed, 'I wish that God would give me a big whip that I could go round the world and whip the wicked out of it'; and the story of how, when he was eleven or twelve, he knocked down another boy who stared rudely at a girl tying up her garter. This latter tale has now become a legend, and, as in most such legends, the hero is made out to have been quite single-minded and splendidly triumphant. The hero himself, however, used to confess that his motives on this particular occasion were mixed – he hit out as much from love of the maiden as from concern for her modesty. And it was the villain of the piece who triumphed. So Stead makes clear in a note to his friend, Mrs. Annie Besant, long afterwards:

'It is true that I struck the boy (who was two years my senior), but it is not true that I came off victor in the fray. On the contrary, he got my head under his arm, punched it severely, and threw me down, falling on top of me, but the girl got her garter tied up in peace. I often think that little scrimmage was prophetic of a good deal that has happened to me and will happen to me through life. I get the thing done that I want to get done, but I go under *pro tem*. Only *pro tem.*, because I always keep bobbing up again!'

[1] *William T. Stead: A Life for the People*, 1885.

CHAPTER 2

THE EDUCATION OF AN EDITOR

Newcastle, February 1870 – *July* 1871

W. T. Stead was exceptional among journalists even in the way in which he started on his career. The story of how he came to be given his first post as editor at the age of twenty-two, before he had ever seen the inside of a newspaper office, is really a remarkable one. The details of it are to be found in a long series of his own letters as preserved in a very musty and delapidated old copying-book covering the three years from April 1869 to April 1872.

The first half-dozen or so of these letters – nearly all of which are written from his father's home at Howden, outside Newcastle – are addressed to 'The Editor, The *Northern Echo*.' The *Northern Echo* was a daily paper founded at Darlington on January 1, 1870. It was the first morning paper in England to be produced at a halfpenny, the only other halfpenny daily then in existence being the London evening paper, the *Echo*, established two years earlier by the famous publisher, John Cassell. Mr. J. Hyslop Bell, already a newspaper proprietor of some experience in the north of England, was largely responsible for the new venture, which he placed under the control of a well-known London journalist, Mr. John Copleston. This Mr. Copleston, as we shall see, was to be W. T. Stead's chief instructor in the art of editing.

The opening letter in the series, dated February 3, 1870, is characteristic in its strenuousness. Young Stead had recently been the prime mover in the starting of a sort of Charity Organization Society in Newcastle. In an article on 'Indiscriminate Almsgiving,' which he now submits to the *Northern Echo*, he urges Darlington to follow Newcastle's example. These societies, he points out, are being formed in several of the towns of the north. The town which is latest to adopt the methods advocated for coping with the problem of mendicity will, he declares, 'receive the blackguardism and impostures' of all those which have taken early action. He will be most happy, he proceeds, to write supplementary articles setting forth the matter more fully. The MS. itself, very neatly written out, is copied on the adjoining pages of the book, but the ink has faded, and it is for the most part illegible.

The article duly saw the light in the *Northern Echo* for February 7, 1870, and its author, intent on his crusade, dispatches a marked copy of the issue with a letter from himself to a man of influence whom he hopes to stir into action. This step brings down upon him a reproof and his first lesson in newspaper etiquette. The Editor points out to him that he must respect the 'anonymity of the Press.' The young contributor expresses penitence. 'I am not learned,' he writes humbly, 'in the laws either of the Press or of Society, and am consequently often a transgressor.'

Other articles are submitted and accepted, and after drastic editorial revision apparently, are in course of time printed. Soon the letters begin to be addressed to Mr. Copleston in person. By the end of June Stead has begun to get worried over the persistent use of the Editor's scissors or blue pencil. Some of his articles have been changed out of all recognition; some have not been used at all. He asks, not rebelliously but anxiously, whether Mr. Copleston's energy – as well as his own – is not being wasted, as his recent articles have been 'almost entirely re-written' in the office. He has begun to fear, he says, that his style is 'radically bad.' Mr. Copleston reassures him. Sometimes the articles in question have been valuable as regards matter, though unsuitable in manner: 'Your actual words and phrases may not have appeared, but can you fail to detect that your communications have been suggestive?' Sometimes they have been marked by shortcomings due to inexperience, mostly technical defects such as the too frequent use of the words 'there is.' Sometimes the alterations or omissions are due to political reasons, sometimes to private reasons, sometimes to 'no explainable reasons.' But they are all due to editorial considerations which Stead in course of time will come to understand. Meanwhile Mr. Copleston expresses himself as keenly appreciative of Stead's work generally, and, if he does 'not write again,' thanks him for what he has done. 'If you *do* write again,' he concluded, 'and will allow me to *use your mind*, I shall be gratified.'[1]

Relieved by these soothing sentences, and eager that his 'mind' should be 'used,' Stead begins to fire away at once with his big ideas. Already he is full of schemes for benefiting mankind. His next letter, which is taken up chiefly with acknowledgments of Mr. Copleston's explanations and criticisms, ends as follows: 'Could you notice the

[1] This letter of Copleston's has been preserved, as well as some others.

circular I sent you? I hope and trust the day is coming – and that before long – when a correct labour register of every district from California to St. Petersburg may be open to every person who knows the Alphabet. That circular is a step.'

In August he starts out on another campaign on which he was to persist to the end. 'I wish we had more American news in our papers,' he writes. 'Gold at so much and cotton at so much – that is about all we get from our Press. Could you not do something in the way of producing union among our scattered English family?' A month later he follows this up by suggesting an article on 'Anglo-Saxon Confederation,' and at the same time he offers an essay on one of the two other subjects to which throughout his life he was to devote his best energies and most fervid enthusiasm – 'Disarmament: the manifest duty of the future.' The Franco-German struggle had broken out and already he had War and its horrors on the brain.

It was in the September of that year, 1870, that Stead had his first experience as a special reporter. A Social Science Congress was to be held at Newcastle, and he arranged to record its proceedings for the *Northern Echo*. 'Two columns a day' was the amount of space he wanted, but he had to make shift with 'from half a column to three-quarters.' It will be easy even for those who have never written a line for a newspaper to imagine the exuberant youth bestirring himself upon this, to him, momentous mission. He does not neglect the tame routine of his office, either now or at any other time – there is ample evidence of that; but office-work is over at 5 o'clock, and then off he dashes to the Congress. Three hours ensue of excited absorption in lectures and debates, which to ninety-nine clerks in a hundred would be either unintelligible or a deadly bore. Then another dash to the Public Library to write his report, and a final dash to the railway station to dispatch the all-important missive by train to Darlington! . . . And so home to Howden by midnight, brain a-fire, heart a-thrill!

And then the ecstasy to look forward to next morning of seeing his work in print! – fellow-scribes who have once been young will not laugh at the word 'ecstasy'!

But, as it happened, there was on that first morning of all to be no ecstasy – only humiliation and dismay! Through some lamentable mishap, some delay or oversight on the part of a tired railway servant, the report had arrived too late! With a sensation of something like physical sickness young Stead was to learn that he had met with his first failure. He was acquitted, however, of all blame for the accident, and he seems to have dealt with the subsequent proceedings of the Congress to his own and his editor's complete satisfaction.

Hitherto religion has had no place in the correspondence, but in a letter dated October 8, Stead writes as follows: the words read quaintly now! – 'How far is it contrary to newspaper etiquette to manifest a belief in any theology? Is it a breach of etiquette to avow belief in any article of religion, from answer to prayer to existence of a Deity?' The two sentences have a sarcastic look about them, but the context seems to indicate that the inquiry is made quite seriously – as by a tyro to an acknowledged authority. 'At present,' he proceeds in the same tone of naïve gravity, 'I think newspapers are very cautious in believing.'

These mild accents are in strange contrast with all one knows of the uncompromising W. T. Stead! Mr. Copleston's various admonitions seem to have instilled into the youth a sense of caution by which he had not been troubled before and from which he was to be delightfully free ever after! It was a very transient mood, in truth, for without waiting for a reply he writes again two days later enclosing an outspoken article on 'Democracy and Christianity.' He deprecates too much 'cutting' of this, though he recognizes that the article is a somewhat long one. 'The subject,' he says, 'is one I have thought much upon. Democracy is the force of the future. Christianity has been judged and condemned by it on the Continent on the specimens of the Papacy. Christianity condemns Republicanism because of Marat.'

We now reach a memorable moment in the relations between editor and contributor. Up to this point there has been no mention of remuneration. The ardent preacher – for that is what he is already – has been so glad to be given a pulpit that he has hesitated to ask for payment for his sermons! But articles are usually paid for – he has learned enough of 'Newspaper etiquette' by this time to be aware of that; and his salary from the Quayside office is only £75 a year, and he is anxious to be able to present his old father with £20 as a Christmas box. (This particular motive is to be deduced from a subsequent letter to his father enclosing a cheque for £20 – a year's savings.) So, taking courage, he writes to Mr. Copleston as follows: 'It is with considerable hesitation that I address you on the present occasion, and I hope you will pardon me if I in any way exceed the bounds of what you consider fitting in a contributor. I have now, since your paper started, contributed about eighteen leaders, one review and one sketch' – not to mention reports, notes, etc. He is aware, he proceeds, that 'voluntary MSS. are at a discount in the editorial sanctum,' but he hopes that Mr. Copleston will be able to arrange that he shall in future receive 'some remuneration, however slight,' for his work.

Four entire weeks elapse before this carefully-weighed epistle is answered, and the answer, when it comes, is a bombshell! The 'voluntary MSS.,' their sender learns, were at an even greater discount than he imagined. The *Northern Echo*, being in low water financially, *is able to pay nothing for them whatever!* Mr. Copleston, however, has had the grace to write very fully, and Stead takes his disappointment in excellent part, if with some inevitable chagrin. 'I am exceedingly obliged,' he answers, 'by your candour in informing me of the commercial position of your paper which I sincerely hope may be improved. I have also to thank you heartily for the assurance that although my articles are very convenient as a gift they are not worth buying at any price. I have been mistaken, I admit, in thinking it was otherwise.' If there be a slight tinge of bitterness in these last words the letter as a whole is quite amicable, and one feels that, pay or no pay, young Stead does not intend to lose his pulpit!

Mr. Copleston, of course, was seriously to blame in not having explained of his own accord, and at a much earlier date, that the *Northern Echo* was not in a position to remunerate its brilliant young contributor. We may assume, I think, that his conscience pricked him. Presently he urges Stead to send him an article so carefully written and free from faults, that instead of using it in the *Northern Echo* he may be able to forward it to some London editor 'who can pay for contributions'; and when Christmas comes he sends Stead a book with a kind letter. In letters written by Stead to him during the following February we find repeated acknowledgments of most valuable advice and most inspiriting encouragement. 'I have the greatest aversion to look at an article after it is finished,' Stead confesses in one of these; 'a very bad fault,' he admits, but one which he 'will overcome in time.' He continues: 'I am much obliged by your favourable opinion . . . I never had a thought about anything I sent you this year being fit for London.'

Even at this period Mr. Copleston may have seen in the talented but ingenuous youth his own possible successor, for his resignation of the editorship of the paper was then impending. However that may be, his letters were just what were required to round off W. T. Stead's journalistic novitiate. Among other things he urges the necessity of studying a 'Printer's Grammar.' 'A Russian grammar and a Chaldæan I have,' Stead replies to him on February 5, 'and almost any between! But a " Printer's Grammar" I have never even heard of!' But he admits that he needs one and determines to get one. He begins now to compose his articles 'with due regard to the rules' and with 'sheets of "gush" suppressed.' He paragraphs his MSS. correctly, writes out 'unusual words plainly,' avoids too frequent similes commencing with 'like,' etc., etc., etc. As the weeks pass, the mentor becomes more and more appreciative, the pupil more and more grateful. 'Read what you write,' Copleston urges him in one letter, '*weighing well the value of every word and the grammatical construction of your sentences;* correct by interlineation and then *re-write with a view to condensation*. In other words, practise writing as an art. Study it as you would painting or music. If you have not read Blair's Lectures you will find them useful. . . . Don't reject this plain simple advice because of its simplicity. I am absolutely certain that its adoption would soon lead to a success which would surprise you as much as the success you have already achieved has surprised me. . . . Of course I need not tell you that my own writing must not be taken as a test of the value of my advice. My faults are glaring – some the results of early carelessness, some of irrepressible habit, most of hurry and perpetual interruption. . . . You must not take me as a model in any respect.' In another letter he takes his contributor to task severely for a one-sided report of a conference on education: 'I am as strong a Protestant as yourself,' he declares, 'but it is necessary to be tolerant, liberal, – Christian, if you please – as well as Protestant. . . . It is assuredly illiberal to note a political opponent's personal shortcoming and to refuse to give him a hearing (in print).' His next letter, after other such words of criticism and counsel, concludes generously: 'I am glad that you have taken my blunt remarks in good part and I sincerely hope that you will have strength and health to persevere; for I do *not* flatter you when I say you have a brilliant future before you. Would I could change talents with you!' 'I am sure,' writes Stead in reply, 'I can never sufficiently express to you my indebtedness for your encouragement and advice at times when I needed both. Whatever my future may be – and youth is apt to paint it in rainbow hues – I sincerely trust that I may never forget my obligation to you.'

This is the longest letter in the whole series and the most intimate and characteristic. Stead confides to the editor whom he has come to regard as a friend, his thoughts and doubts as to the future. The moment, he thinks, has come when he must decide whether to embark definitely on a journalistic career and thereby acquire greater power, perhaps, for benefiting his fellow-men, or to continue, less ambitiously, in the multifarious activities which fill up his life in Newcastle. He catalogues them. He is a leading worker in the Howden Sunday School, Secretary of the Tract Society, conductor of the Cottage Meeting, President of a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society, 'which embraces the management of a Cricket Club and of a Club Room,' and acting Secretary of the Newcastle Mendicity Society; and he has recently been asked to join a local Preachers' Society. He is reckoned upon, moreover, to take a leading part in organizing a system of house-to-house visitation for the benefit of the Newcastle poor. Finally he is conscious of a special gift for addressing children, and he knows he could count on a regular attendance of over a hundred were he to take on a class in the winter. All these things call to him to go on doing 'what lies to his hand.' If he is to become a journalist in real earnest, he must concentrate all his energies in one direction. Possibly he might thus win through to a wider sphere of influence, but can he be *sure* of such success? And he quotes his hero Cromwell: 'It's a ticklish question whether a man may seek a high place to do good in!'

Mr. Copleston's opinion is all that can be desired. Stead need have no doubts as to his journalistic faculties. 'Success is certain!'

Stead's next letter is full of interest also. Mr. Copleston has raised the question of ways and means. Stead confesses that concerning the remuneration commonly accorded for journalistic work he is 'as ignorant as a child.'

This letter, though some readers may smile at its high-flown language, will ring true in the ears of all who came later to know Stead intimately, and to love and admire him. He does not intend, he protests in it, to mortgage his future for wealth. He has never thought of wealth as 'an ultimate object,' and would never dream of comparing it with the position of a leader of men. 'If my life may be the means of doing *much* good in my day (and perhaps afterwards) I dedicate it to that purpose. And any prospect of wealth and comfort which may have to be sacrificed – what is it? Dust in the balance.' To chose wealth instead of such influence, would be to sell Christ as did Judas. 'It may be romantic, enthusiastic, Quixotic and visionary, but

> "The hardening of the heart that brings
> Irreverence for the dreams of youth"

has not yet chilled my soul.' He has long been troubled by the injustices and cruelties of the world. 'Never do I walk the streets but I see wretched ruins of humanity, women stamped and crushed into devils by society, and my heart has been racked with anguish for these victims of our Juggernaut. . . . And the children nursed in debauchery, suckled in crime, pedestined to a life of misery and shame! . . . Beneath the fair foundations of our wealth and commerce I have heard the groans of the broken and despairing and I have longed for a way to remedy, to remove, these things.' It is in this spirit, he says, that his ambitions have turned towards the Press and that, in Cromwell's phrase again, he has coveted the 'high place to do good in.'

We now enter on the concluding phase of the whole episode. After the exchange of a few more letters of a no less cordial and confidential nature – in one of which Mr. Copleston reveals personal troubles of his own – the two correspondents temporarily exchange *rôles*, the senior applying to the junior for literary advice. Mr. Copleston has drafted a memorandum to three members of the 'Advanced Liberal Party' urging that a conference of 'trustworthy and earnest Reformers' should be called to discuss the political situation generally and the need for the founding of a 'new organ of opinion' in particular. Doubtful about his own wording of this document he puts it in Stead's hands for emendation. One imagines that, had this project materialized, the editor of the *Northern Echo* hoped to be placed in charge of the new journal, with Stead as his assistant. It came to nothing, however, and in the absence of any other such opening Mr.

Copleston, who was dissatisfied with his actual post, decided to leave England and betake himself to America. It is clear that he had much to suffer at the hands of his employer, Mr. Hyslop Bell.

Towards the end of April a brisk interchange of letters begins between Stead and Mr. Bell, who has evidently been much impressed by his ability and who has paid a visit to Newcastle for the purpose of offering him the succession to Mr. Copleston. Of Mr. Bell's communications, as of Mr. Copleston's, one gets a very definite impression from Stead's replies. The proprietor does not appear at this period to quite such good advantage as the editor. Stead is almost at the end of his patience by the time he has at last got his contract satisfactorily made out in black and white. Throughout the following nine years he was to be able to work with his chief on excellent terms, but their relations at first were not auspicious. 'And now good-bye to Mr. Bell' we find him writing to Mr. Copleston on July 27, 1871, in a letter in which he has been recording some of the vexatious features of the negotiations just terminated, 'and may he never be visited with one-quarter of the worry he has inflicted on you!'

At this point Mr. Copleston passes out of the story though not entirely out of Stead's life. Letters of his indicate something of his subsequent career. August 1874 sees him installed in some editorial capacity at the office of *The New York World.* In January 1875, still in New York, he notes with playful sympathy Stead's list of his domestic joys at Darlington : 'You must be happy!' he writes. 'Let me remember! How many rabbits was it? And 1 horse, 1 pig, 3 dogs, 1 boy, 1 girl, 1 baby, and 1 wife!' In 1886 Copleston is 'free-lancing' in Fleet Street. In 1893 he is editor of the *Evening News.*

If Mr. Bell, as self-portrayed in this early correspondence, does not cut an entirely pleasing figure, it is much to his credit that, dealing with so very impetuous and inexperienced a young man as Stead, he was considerate enough to recommend him, before committing himself, to take counsel with some one competent to give good advice, suggesting the name of Mr. T. W. Reid, then editor of the *Leeds Mercury* – the future Sir Wemyss Reid, so well known as the biographer of W. E. Forster and of Lord Houghton, as General Manager for many years of the publishing firm of Cassell and Co., and as founder and editor of the *Speaker* (now the *Nation.*) No more suit-able adviser could have been found, for not only had Reid 'been through the mill' and learnt all that was to be known about provincial journalism, but, his father having been an old friend of the Rev. William Stead, and, like him, a Congregational Minister, he was sympathetically interested in the case.

Stead adopted Mr. Bell's suggestion and, after an exchange of letters with the young editor of the *Mercury* (his senior by only seven or eight years), betook himself to Leeds. Those who have read Sir Wemyss Reid's posthumous volume of Memoirs published in 1905, will doubtless recall his vivid and entertaining description of the memorable interview that ensued. It was the first time, as we know, that Stead had penetrated into a newspaper office of any kind, and as he sat at Reid's desk beside him in the course of the evening and watched him writing his leader he looked on 'with the admiring eyes of a novice.' But the novice had, even then, 'his own ideas as to how leaders ought to be written and newspapers edited, and he did not affect to conceal them.' The passage deserves to be given almost in full:

'There was something that was irresistible in his candour, his enthusiasm, and his self-confidence. The Press was the greatest agency for influencing public opinion in the world. It was the true and only lever by which thrones and governments could be shaken and the masses of the people raised. . . . For hour after hour he talked with an ardour and a freshness which delighted me. If he had come to me in the guise of a pupil he very quickly reversed our position and lectured me for my own good on questions of journalistic usage which I thought I had settled for myself a dozen years before I met him. Often I thought his ideas ridiculous: once or twice I thought that he himself must be mad; but even then I admired his splendid enthusiasm and his engaging frankness. Occasionally I said to him: "If you were ever to get your way you would make the Press a wonderful thing no doubt; but you would make the Press-man the best hated creature in the Universe." At this he would burst into a roar of laughter, in which I was constrained to join. "I see, you think I'm crazy," he said once. "Well, not crazy, perhaps, but distinctly eccentric. You will come out all right, however, when you have had a little experience." Thus, in my blind belief in my own superior experience and wisdom, I thought and spoke. Many a time since then I have recalled that long night's talk, when I have recognized in some daring development of modern journalism one of the many schemes which Stead then flashed before my eyes. We had talked – or, rather, he had talked – for hours after getting home from work. I was far from being weary of his conversation, but I knew that the night had passed and I rose and drew aside the curtains. Never shall I forget the look of amazement that overspread Stead's face when the sunshine streamed into the room. "Why, it is daylight!" he exclaimed, with an air of bewilderment. "I never sat up till daylight in my life before." '

The substance of Reid's advice in regard to the definite question of his appointment was that he should accept it without hesitation, but that he should try to get Mr. Bell to pay him £180 for the first year instead of the £150 offered. To this Mr. Bell demurred, but as he had already agreed to the conditions to which Stead attached most importance, notably an arrangement making it possible for him to abstain from Sunday work and to spend his week-ends at home, an understanding at length was reached, and in the last letter on the subject included in the old copying-book, Stead tells Mr. Bell that he is 'perfectly satisfied.' The letter is noteworthy by reason of its sturdy, independent, not-going-to-stand-any-nonsense-from-you attitude:

'I thank you,' it proceeds, 'for your frank declaration that you would think a request to write anything contrary to conviction "as dishonourable as an attempt to pick a pocket," but you must be aware that many newspaper proprietors have very different ideas upon the subject. With regard to my "inexperienced suggestions," I am perfectly willing to admit that they were inexperienced, but being entirely ignorant of the established customs of the Press I must be forgiven for thinking that matters of business arrangement could never be too clearly defined between gentlemen in any profession.

'I am aware that you risk much in engaging me. I risk myself – which I must confess is of considerable importance to me. But, however we may have stumbled over the preliminaries, I trust that it may be the only misunderstanding between us, and that by twelve months' loyal and hearty service I may prove to you that you were justified in accepting the risk of installing me in such a responsible position.'

It is interesting and rather touching to turn from these communications of July 1871 to an article in the *Review of Reviews* for July 1894, entitled 'A North-Country Worthy,' in which Stead summarizes most sympathetically and generously the public services of his old employer. Throughout the intervening twenty-four years the two men had remained in touch, although meeting seldom after Stead's departure from Darlington in 1880. They were in general agreement as to political matters and they often co-operated on behalf of the various causes which they both had at heart; but while Stead kept the very centre of the stage Mr. Bell gradually drifted more and more into the background. At the date in question his worldly fortunes have fallen so low that a movement has had to be set on foot for a money testimonial to him in recognition of his work for his Party, and to this movement Stead gives warm and effective support. It is quite a short article, but it is probably the best record of Mr. Bell's career to be found anywhere in print, and it came fittingly from the pen of the brilliant and ardent man whose early promise he had been so quick to recognize.

CHAPTER 3

EDITOR OF THE *NORTHERN ECHO*, DARLINGTON

July 1871 – *September* 1880

I

THE EARLY 'SEVENTIES

The very youthful editor took up his post in an exultant mood. His only serious trouble, he declares in a letter to one of his many corespondents at Howden – it comes towards the end of that old letter-book – is that he has no trouble of any kind! 'The depths of our sorrow,' he has learned from Carlyle, 'is the measure of our nobleness.' But he, William Thomas Stead, has no sorrow to plumb! His prospects are 'fair and brilliant' and all goes 'as merry for him as a marriage bell.'

To another he writes in a similar vein of high spirits. His spirits, he fears, threaten to be altogether *too* high for staid, prosaic Darlington. The proprietor of the *Northern Echo* wants him to excite 'the veneration of every subordinate' in the office. This will mean wearing a tall hat and kid gloves and walking in a measured manner. No more undignified running! – even at twenty-two, seemingly, he has not outgrown altogether his boyish propensity to run rather than walk.[1] In short, he is going to be 'corked up and bottled down' and become as solemn as a Quaker. Only when back at Howden for the week-ends will he be himself again. Then he will 'explode' and 'astonish the natives.'

Stead's life at Darlington from that summer of 1871 down to the autumn of 1876 was peaceful and unexciting. The first event of importance in those years was his marriage on June 10, 1873, to Miss Emma Lucy Wilson, daughter of Mr. Henry Wilson, of Howden. His bride had been a playmate of his in childhood and he had, he says, fallen in love with her now for the third time. A tactful letter from Wemyss Reid, commending warmly his two years' editing of the *Northern Echo*, had helped him to secure, first an increase of his salary to £200 a year, and secondly Mr. Wilson's approval of him as a son-in-law. The young couple made their home in a house called Grainey Hill, surrounded by trees, situated two miles out of Darlington. I need not reprint here from his daughter's book Stead's own record of that period of tranquil happiness. The first child, Willie, was born in 1874. A boy and girl helped in the house – there was no grown-up servant. Stead rode on a pony to his office after dark and back home again about two or three in the morning. 'The life of the little household was well under weigh before I woke,' Stead tells us, 'but the rest of the day we spent together.'

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[1] Even in London in the early 'eighties he used sometimes to run from one end of Pall Mall to the other. It amused him to note the expression on John Morley's face on hearing this! Reflecting upon this tendency of his, Stead compared himself with a mainspring uncoiling when it has been wound up too tight.

'The world is likely to be very quiet when you come,' the Rev. Henry Kendall, of Darlington, had written to Stead in June 1871, 'Paris insurrection put down, Tichborne case decided, people disgusted with Parliament.' The world of England at least was to remain comparatively quiet during these early 'seventies, but a glance over the bound volumes of the *Northern Echo* shows one that there were to be few days on which Stead lacked a theme to his taste. The great Tichborne case – more absorbing at that period than almost any other subject – was, as a matter of fact, not ended: not until February 28, 1874, did the 'Claimant' receive his sentence of 14 years' penal servitude. Paris, although the terrors of the Commune were over, continued to arouse anxious attention, and French politics took on a new interest when, in May 1872, Marshal McMahon succeeded Thiers in the Presidency of the Republic. Affairs at Westminster became as absorbing as ever at the commencement of the following year, Gladstone resigning the Premiership and Disraeli coming into power. There were many other noteworthy happenings, some of them epoch-making: in 1871, Japan's abolition of feudalism; the first meeting of the Reichstag in Berlin; the opening of a new page in the history of Rome as capital of a united Italy; in 1872, the Alabama award; the re-election of Grant as American President; the taking of Khiva by the Russians; the Shah's visit to London. There were the deaths, also, of many men of world-wide fame – Mazzini, Napoleon III,[1] Horace Greeley, John Stuart Mill, Hans Christian Andersen.

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[1] A letter from a Whitby enthusiast seems to be typical of the way in which Stead's readers were moved sometimes by his articles. It tells how in a crowded room at a hotel there one gentleman asked permission to read aloud the *Northern Echo* leader on the death of Napoleon III and how it became the subject of general conversation throughout the evening, every one agreeing as to its brilliancy and one man declaring that he 'would have it framed and hung up in his room.'

At the end of 1872 there was the dangerous illness of the Prince of Wales. These were among the matters which gave Stead most scope for his pen. His 'leaders' were characterized by just the qualities which were presently to make him famous: the Stead of Darlington is exactly the same person as the Stead of London, preaching the same doctrines. It may be interesting here to cite some reflections of his on this point, written in 1899, just after The Hague Conference and on the eve of the Boer War. They are in answer to the charges of instability and inconsistency then being brought against him with more than usual vigour by his opponents.

'I am the more proud (he declared) at the discovery of the absolute identity of what I wrote in 1870 and what I am writing to-day because no charge has been more constantly brought against me than that I am unstable and inconsistent. No one knows where to have me – I am always flying off at a tangent and so forth and so forth. It is easy to understand these criticisms. Those who have no other pole-star than the policy of their party or the interest of their leader, naturally misunderstand the course of the mariner who steers by the stars. It is because I have been so constantly faithful to my principles, that I am accused of having alternately supported and deserted every party in the State and every leader whom I have followed. The real reason is obvious. Parties and leaders are to me merely so many forces which must be utilized as far as possible for the furtherance of the causes to which I have devoted my life.

'I remember nearly twenty years ago discussing the question of political creeds with one of the most thoughtful of the Liberal leaders.[1] He was deploring the lack among all modern politicians of any organic body of political doctrine. "Which of us," he asked, "has any definite creed, any standpoint of reasoned conviction from which he approaches consideration of any and every question as it arises? Bentham and the older Radicals had such a creed, an articulated scheme of the universe which may have been very imperfect, but it gave them a standpoint. Even Cobden, although not so philosophical as Bentham, had a definite principle which he never hesitated to apply to all problems which confronted statesmen. But to-day we are all living from hand to mouth without chart, compass or creed. Mr. Gladstone is an opportunist of one sort, Mr. Chamberlain an opportunist of another sort. No one has any body of doctrine, any definite conception of where we are all going or even at the goal at which we ought to aim. We are all at sea."

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[1] He alludes to Lord Morley.

'"Speak for yourself, sir," I said, "and your Parliament men if you please."

'"What," he retorted, "do you mean to say that you have such a credo?"

'"I do," I replied.

'"Rehearse it then," he insisted. "What is your body of sound doctrine?"

'And then and there I went over the heads of what I afterwards elaborated under the title "The Gospel According to the *P.M.G.*"

'When I had done, my Mentor was good enough to admit that I had at least a definite creed, something to stand by, "differing therein," he added somewhat bitterly, "from all of us – from Mr. Gladstone downwards."

'I hold to my gospel as firmly as ever. It is true that the Imperialists are at present discrediting the true Imperialism. But the Apostles did not shrink from founding a Christian church because of the abuses by which nominal Christians were subsequently to discredit Christianity. Neither do I shrink from the responsibility of preaching the gospel according to the *P.M.G.* because some of my disciples have used Imperialism as a pretext for carrying fire and sword to the South African Republics.'

Stead had no difficulty in demonstrating that the Gospel of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and of the *Review of Reviews* had been in all essentials the Gospel of the *Northern Echo*. He gave chapter and verse in support of his contention, showing how in one article he pleaded for a statesmanlike system of emigration to Canada, Australia, and South Africa, 'before even Mr. Disraeli discovered the colonies to be more than mill-stones round our necks'; how in another he formulated his hopes as to the United States of Europe a quarter of a century before the starting of his 'War against War'; the youth of twenty-five was just a little more sanguine than the man of fifty, but the sentiments were the same.

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It was at Darlington that Stead made acquaintance with the first of the many famous men in whose lives he was to become an influence – Albert, the fourth Earl Grey. He had begun in 1873 to exchange letters with Albert Grey's uncle, the Earl Grey who had been Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1846–1852, and whom he once summed up in the sentence: 'the Third Earl had almost every gift needed by a statesman save the very important capacity of agreeing with his colleagues or of making them agree with him.' The distinguished old nobleman, already a septuagenarian, became a constant reader of the *Northern Echo*, and was one of the first to proclaim its merits, in a letter to *The Times* concerning the problem of the Gold Coast, which Stead had been discussing in a series of articles. He wrote frequently and fully and very cordially to the young editor, but his letters – concerned for the most part with colonial affairs – are of little interest to-day. Nor was he himself, apparently, a man of very interesting personality.

His nephew, Albert, on the other hand, was one of the most fascinating figures of the time – a very exceptional type of the young English aristocrat, cultured, broad-minded, impressionable, expansive and an idealist. Writing in October 1904, on the eve of Grey's departure for Canada, there to assume the Governor Generalship, Stead thus describes him:

> 'Earl Grey is one of our Elizabethans, a breed which will never die out until the English race is extinct. In his person, in his ideas, in his restless energy, he recalls the type of the great adventurers who sailed the Spanish Main. There is about him the very aroma of the knighthood of the sixteenth century. He is ever in the saddle with spear at rest, ready to ride forth on perilous quests for the rescue of oppressed damsels, or for the vanquishing of giants or dragons, whose brood still infest the land. There is a generous abandon, a free, daring, almost reckless, spirit about him. He is one of those rare and most favoured mortals who possess the head of a mature man and the heart of a boy. His very presence, with his alert eye and responsive smile, his rapid movements and his frank impulses, reminds one of the heather hills of Northumberland, the bracing breezes of the North Country coast, the free, untrammelled out-of-doors life of the romantic Border.'

Among the thousand and one other questions engaging young Albert Grey's attention in the 'seventies was an ambitious programme put forward by the Church Reform Union, of which he was a leading member. The idea was to make the Church of England really wide-embracing, to make it 'national' in more than name. It was in connection with this movement that he and Stead met. The two zealots took to each other immediately and an intimacy began which lasted until Stead's death. When Cecil Rhodes came to ask Stead 'who would be the most desirable, most sympathetic and most capable person' in England to help him to obtain the Charter for Rhodesia, Stead at once named Albert Grey; and Rhodes ever afterwards was enthusiastic over the choice. 'Above everything else, he introduced me to Rhodes,' Grey himself remarked on his death-bed, discussing with a sympathetic listener their friendship of nearly two-score years' standing. It had been an almost unbroken friendship, but its warmth had varied; it was apt to be chilled by Grey's impatience with 'Spooks' and by Stead's Anti-Chamberlainism and Pro-Boerism. There is trace of these 'imperfect sympathies' in the memories thus recorded by Mr. Harold Begbie, in his charming little book, *Albert, 4th Earl Grey; A Last Word* –

' "Stead amused me to begin with," said Grey, speaking of those times. "I found that this provincial editor of an obscure paper was corresponding with kings and emperors all over the world and receiving long letters from statesmen of every nation. This struck me as odd and interesting. Later on, I discovered that the man was a sincere patriot, with a fervent desire to make things better and a keen sense, too, of the value of the Empire. I used to go long walks with him, talking about the state of the people in England and discussing the best ways for improving their condition. He was perfectly sane in those days. That dreadful craze of his about departed spirits had not begun to show itself. I got a great many good ideas from him. On the whole he was a fine fellow and quite honest." '

That Grey felt more warmly about Stead in other moods, even at this period, is evident from their correspondence, but his remarks to Mr. Begbie are significant and typical. That 'dreadful craze,' as it seemed to the world at large, was to distress many of Stead's old friends – some of them it alienated completely. Stead used to declare, however, that he made ten new friends through Spiritualism for every one old friend whom he lost.

* * *

It was in the 'seventies also that Stead became interested in the personality of another very remarkable Grey of Northumberland, namely Mrs. Josephine Butler, daughter of John Grey, of Dilston, a famous champion of Reform in his time. Mrs. Butler was one of Stead's heroines and throughout her life she was one of his most ardent supporters and closest friends. In 1869 her name had been prominent, together with those of Mary Carpenter, Florence Nightingale, Harriet Martineau, and sixteen others, in connection with a protest against the Contagious Diseases Acts which provided for the compulsory examination of prostitutes in English garrison towns. The Rev. George Butler, her husband, later well known as a Canon of Winchester, was at that time Principal of Liverpool College, and in Liverpool Mrs. Butler's work among the outcasts of the streets had attracted much notice. Incidentally it had laid her open to many insults and calumnies. In reply to some of these she herself was moved to write:

> 'I have but one little spare bedroom in my house. Into that little room I have received with my husband's joyful consent one after another of these my fallen sisters; we have given to them in the hour of trouble, sickness, and death, the best that our house could afford. . . . I have nursed these poor outcasts filled with disease and have loved them as if they had been my own sisters. Many have died in my arms. We afterwards hired a house in which we received others that came. Not far from us is a cemetery in a sunny corner of which there stands a row of humble graves beneath which lie the earthly remains of those our children, fallen women, prostitutes, if you like to call them so, but now resting on the bosom of that Saviour who came to seek and save that which was lost. For every one of these departed in good hope and joyfully, having found – besides the deeper peace – the treasure of a pure friendship before they died. . . . I am ashamed to be driven to this self-defence, but I am still more ashamed that any English gentleman should have forced an English lady to put forth such a defence or to record what we would rather for ever conceal, seeing that we have only done what it was our duty to do for the poor and sinful.'

In a little biography of Mrs. Butler, on which he busied himself while in Holloway Jail,[1] Stead records how his own mother and the mother of his future wife canvassed the women of Howden for signatures to a petition for the repeal of the C.D. Acts (as they were called) which Mrs. Butler was getting up in 1870:

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[1] *Josephine Butler: A Life Sketch*, 1886.

'It was the first time (he says) that I had ever seen my mother promote a petition to Parliament. . . . The feeling was especially strong in the North, the natural home of all good causes. But whether it was strong or weak, whether men swore with burning tears to do as Wat the Tyler did, or whether they contented themselves with a languid protest against the legalized iniquity, all drew their inspiration from Mrs. Butler.'

She had then just published her first pamphlet: *An Appeal to the People of England on the Recognition and Superintendence of Prostitution by Governments*. By an English Mother. It contained, as Stead says, all her favourite doctrines: 'the indignant repudiation of the theory that the good ever perishes out of the woman so far as to justify man in treating her as a chattel and without rights; the shuddering horror of the compulsory examination, "that torture intolerable to womanhood, which does violence to the deepest and most indelible instincts of her nature," the vindication of the absolute and inalienable right of the woman to the sovereignty of her person and the clear identification of the Contagious Diseases Acts with the French system with all its sequences of doom.' In 1873, Mr. (afterwards Sir James) Stansfield became the spokesman of the movement in Parliament. Among its other sympathizers were John Stuart Mill, Victor Hugo, and Mazzini. William Lloyd Garrison, the pioneer of slave emancipation in America, spoke of it as one of the most remarkable uprisings ever witnessed 'against unjust, criminal, and immoral legislation.' On the English Press it had few champions more strenuous and ardent than Stead, but it was not until the beginning of 1876 that he came into personal touch with Mrs. Butler. *The New Abolitionists*, a book recording the progress of her campaign, had just been issued and, while much stirred by its contents, he felt that they were not presented in a way to reach the great public. The movement needed an *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he held – might not Mrs. Butler herself be its Mrs. Stowe? He wrote to her to this effect. The following passage from her reply is noteworthy not only in itself but also in the light of Stead's own achievement nine years later:

'Here is slavery and tragedy enough, but how would a book here be read which contained the ghastly truth? Yet it will have to be made known in some way. For surely God will arise one day and the tormented creatures whom He created and cares for will be avenged. If the corruption of our aristocracy were fully known, I think it would hasten republicanism among us.'

Stead remained in such close relations with Mrs. Butler throughout her career and took so active a part in all her work that her biography, as recorded in the little volume cited, may almost be said to be part and parcel of his own. Her name will recur in other pages of this book. A characteristic passage in some reminiscences penned by him in 1893 will show how passionately he felt upon the matter which forged the bond between them. In regard to the C.D. Acts he was more uncompromising than in regard to any other subject whatsoever – which is saying a good deal!

'It was one of the subjects (he declares) upon which I have always been mad. I am ready to allow anybody to discuss anything in any newspaper I edit: they may deny the existence of God or of the soul; they may blaspheme all the angels or all the saints; they may maintain that I am the latest authentic incarnation of the devil, but one thing I will never allow them to do, that is to say a word in favour of the C.D. Acts or of any modification of the system which makes women the chattel and slave of the administration for the purpose of ministering to the worst passions of the other sex. That is the only subject upon which I can never allow anybody to say a word upon the devil's side in any publication under my control.'

II

THE BULGARIAN ATROCITIES AGITATION. STEAD AND MR. GLADSTONE AND MME. NOVIKOFF

Stead's recollections of some episodes in his career lie scattered about in old volumes of the *Review of Reviews* and of other periodicals even less accessible to most people; many of these recollections it will be my task to weave together. Of other episodes he has left full and consecutive accounts in books which are available everywhere. Thus the whole story of the Bulgarian Atrocities agitation of 1876 and of the great political conflict of the subsequent three years is to be found in *The M.P. for Russia*, the work, published in 1909, in which he presented the 'reminiscences and correspondence' of his friend, Madame Olga Novikoff. There is no need to tell the story here in any detail, but we must recall the outstanding facts and dates of that stirring period.

In May, June, and July 1876 there had been risings in Herzegovina, Bosnia, and Bulgaria against Turkish rule, and these had been ruthlessly put down. In August the *Daily News* published a series of vivid letters from the famous Irish-American war correspondent, J. A. MacGahan, describing terrible Turkish outrages and massacres in Bulgaria. The town of Darlington, largely through Stead's initiative, was the first in England to hold a public meeting to express indignation against the British Government's tacit sympathy with the Sultan. Other such meetings followed elsewhere in quick succession and the anti-Turk agitation reached its climax when, early in September, Gladstone issued his world-famous pamphlet, *The Bulgarian Horrors*, with these memorable phrases in it: 'Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner by carrying off themselves! Their Zaptiehs and their Mudirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbashis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, shall, I hope, clear out from the province they have desecrated and profaned.'

On September 9, Gladstone followed up his pamphlet with a great speech at Blackheath; how Stead travelled to London to hear it and how it thrilled him (as described in his own words) will be remembered by all readers of the memoir by his daughter. No finer, no more inspiring spectacle, he declared, had he ever witnessed. But looking back thirty years later upon the struggle then entered upon, Stead reflected mournfully that its aims were not fully attained. Gladstone from that hour, he says, made it the main business of his life to defeat Lord Beaconsfield's pro-Turkish, anti-Russian policy:

'To a large extent he succeeded. For England was delivered from the infamy of unsheathing her sword in support of the savage tyranny of the Turks and, thanks solely to the magnificent self-sacrifice and enthusiasm of the Russian people, Bulgaria was freed.

'But to a large extent he failed. He was unable to compel Lord Beaconsfield to take the only step by which the Russo-Turkish war could have been averted. The English fleet did not co-operate with the Russian army in demanding redress for the wronged Bulgarians. One hundred thousand human lives were sacrificed as the result of that failure. And if to-day Macedonia is a byword and a reproach to Christendom, the despair of Christendom and a disgrace to the human race, it is solely due to the fact that the movement launched that day at Blackheath was not strong enough to prevent Lord Beaconsfield from using his power to thrust Macedonia, emancipated by Russian sword, back under the hoofs of the Turkish hordes.'

On November 9, 1876, at the Lord Mayor of London's annual banquet at the Guildhall, Lord Beaconsfield made it clear that he was still on the side of the Turks and that, should Russia move against them, his Government was prepared to declare war in their defence. The historic public meeting of protest at the St. James's Hall on December 8, at which Gladstone was the chief speaker and at which Carlyle was present, was the answer to the Premier's declaration. Then came the abortive European Conference at Constantinople, at which Lord Salisbury was the British representative. On April 14, 1877, Russia declared war against Turkey and the anti-Russian feeling among English Jingoes reached its height during that year. On March 4, 1878, Russia and Turkey concluded peace by the Treaty of San Stefano. At the Berlin Congress in July Lord Beaconsfield agreed on behalf of Great Britain to dealings with the Turks which satisfied nobody, and returned home claiming that he brought 'Peace with honour.' The electorate, however, had already begun to turn against him and in April 1880, Gladstone came into power.

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The impression prevails that Stead owed his pro-Russianism entirely to Madame Novikoff, but as a matter of fact he was a fervid pro-Russian long before he ever heard her name: many articles in the *Northern Echo* during the years 1871–5 could be adduced in proof of this. He was to be one of Madame Novikoff's most affectionate and devoted friends, working with her most zealously for that Anglo-Russian friendship which was their common aim, but he was not one of her many 'converts.' Nor was he the submissive devotee that most people persisted in imagining. On the contrary, Madame Novikoff found him altogether too free-thinking and free-speaking sometimes for her taste. There was, as we shall see, one subject in particular – religious intolerance – concerning which he was wont to condemn the rulers of her beloved country in terms that called forth her extreme indignation.

How strange have been Madame Novikoff's vicissitudes! The political gossips of the 'seventies, 'eighties, and 'nineties were never tired of talking of her; her pseudonym, 'O.K.' – standing for Olga Kiréeff, her maiden name – was to be met with in the Press continually. Liberals thought of her admiringly as one of 'Dizzy's' cleverest critics; Tories angrily as Gladstone's mischievous accomplice. After Gladstone's death she was forgotten for a while. Then came what was called, in words that have now a painfully ironic sound, 'the great new friendship between England and Russia' and for an all-too-brief period Madame Novikoff reappeared upon the stage, radiant over the realization of all her hopes. Another year or two and those hopes lay withered.

'A marvellously generous and unselfish nature, incapacity to be dull or feel dull or think that life is dull – a delicious sense of the humorous, an ingenious mind, a courtliness, and with all this something of the goddess. She had a presence into which people came. And then she had a visible Russian soul. There was in her features that unfamiliar gleam which we are all pursuing now, through opera, literature and art – the Russian genius.'

That is a portrait of Madame Novikoff in her heyday, painted by an enthusiast, Mr. Stephen Graham, who has known her only in her old age – the sentences are taken from the introduction to her book *Russian Memories*.[1]

And here, from a review of it in the *Westminster Gazette*, is a discriminating analysis of her whole character and career:

'Madame Novikoff owns that "of all the compliments ever paid to her" the one describing her as a "true Russian" pleases her most. In the interesting episodes of her life since, forty years ago, she paid her first visit to England, depicted in *Russian Memories*, nothing stands out more clearly than the fact that the epithet is very justified. She is a Russian indeed, and in her long residence in London has not shed one of the characteristics of her nation; it appears on every page that hers are, to the full, such national traits as flaming enthusiasm combined with determined perseverance; mastery of political and diplomatic situations with happy absorption in small and graceful femininities; the young girl's ingenuousness with the discriminating insight of a ripened intellect accustomed to the subtleties of international politics and diplomacy; the womanly appeal to sentiment and the virile facing of hard facts. Typical of the educated Russian are also the spontaneity of her style, and the freshness and enjoyment she brings to the writing of this her latest work, as she has brought to every subject on which she has written these forty years since, first, under the guidance of her life-long friend, Mr. W. T. Stead, she began her labours for the better understanding between Russia and Great Britain.'

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[1] *Russian Memories*, by Madame Olga Novikoff, with an Introduction by Stephen Graham, 1916.

There is always a sadness in trying to conjure up a vision of the radiant youth of someone very old, but Madame Novikoff's sense of humour helps us to look back smilingly at her portraits in the middle 'seventies. They show us a comely young woman, not beautiful exactly, but, as Mr. Graham says, with 'a presence,' overflowing, too, with vitality. She records for us a comment on her appearance made by John Bright some ten or twelve years later, when he himself was well over seventy – a comment which piqued her vanity a little at the time, for she had been at some pains to win his favour and had expected just a little more in the way of appreciation. She had had a two hours' interview with him and had let him do all the talking. 'I saw O.K. the other day,' Mr. Bright said afterwards to someone whom they both knew. 'I was very much struck with her. She is the very picture of health and strength. She will never grow old.' That was all!

Most of Madame Novikoff's famous admirers were middle-aged or elderly men, susceptible to the charm of her youthful vitality, but she had many other charms. She was delightfully different from everybody else, with her Russian unconventionality and her blend of unfeminine knowledge of politics and very feminine sympathy and responsiveness and tact. A passage from the Preface which Froude wrote to her second book, *Russia and England*, in 1880, will show us the estimation in which she was held. After an allusion to her heroic brother (whose story, as told in Kinglake's *Crimean War*, 'resembles,' he says, 'a legend of some mythic Roman patriot or Mediæval Crusader') Froude writes:

'Under the influence of the same passionate patriotism which sent her brother to his death, the sister has laboured year after year in England, believing that, however misled, we are a generous people at heart and that, if we really knew the objects at which Russia was aiming we should cease to suspect or thwart them. Her self-imposed task has been so hard that only enthusiasm could have carried her through it. We in our present humour, believing that the world is governed solely by selfish interests, have forgotten that there were times in our history, and those the times best worth remembering, when interest was nothing to us and some cause which we considered holy was everything. Among those of us who have heard of this lady many have regarded her as a secret instrument of the Russian Court, and persons who have held such an opinion about her are unlikely to change it, however absurd it may be, for any words of mine. By those who can still appreciate noble and generous motives, the Kiréeffs will be recognised as belonging to the very exceptional race of mortals who form the forlorn hopes of mankind, who are, perhaps, too quixotic, but to whom history makes amends by consecrating their memories.'

It is easy to imagine how thrilling it must have been for Stead at twenty-seven and at the very height of his ardour over the affairs of the Near East, to meet this daughter of Russia. E. A. Freeman, the historian, brought them together. Freeman himself had been a warm applauder of the *Northern Echo* throughout 1876 and 1877 – 'the best paper in Europe' he had called it in a letter to a friend. In September 1877, he sent Stead a note from Madame Novikoff containing these words: 'The more I read the *Northern Echo*, the more I admire it. Can you tell me the name of the Editor? I should greatly like to make his acquaintance.' And a few weeks later Madame Novikoff wrote to Stead inviting him to call on her at Symond's Hotel, in Brook Street, Mayfair, next time he should be in London.

It was in the following October that Stead first availed himself of this invitation. At her 'salon' during the years that followed, he met Gladstone, Kinglake, Froude, Matthew Arnold, and a score of other men of great distinction and renown. A Boswellian record of some of those gatherings at Symond's Hotel – or at the more fashionable Claridge's, whither Madame Novikoff presently removed – would be delightful. Stead's own references to them (cited in Miss Estelle Stead's *My Father*) and Madame Novikoff's own, are tantalizingly meagre. What sort of first impression did the young Darlington editor make on all these big-wigs and men of rank and fashion who made up Madame Novikoff's circle? How did he dress? Did he force himself to wear the tall hat he so detested? And were the clothes in keeping? Or had he the effrontery to show himself in that new check suit in which he was photographed at this period and which, even in 1909, he did not hesitate to display in a full-page illustration in *The M.P. for Russia*? In any case we may be sure that his tailoring did him terrible injustice. A letter which Froude wrote to Madame Novikoff long afterwards – in March 1889 – is significant: 'I have been reading Stead's book (on Russia) with real pleasure. He is a far abler man than I supposed him to be and with his political judgments generally I entirely agree. He is well informed and has a straight eye, and except on certain subjects, which need not be alluded to further, very right-minded. Why is he not more beautiful to look at?'[1]

That deplorable check suit would have ruined anyone's appearance! Similarly garbed, Froude himself would have looked impossible. And from what we know of Stead he was really quite capable of thus outraging the sensibilities of Mayfair.

Madame Novikoff was often referred to as Gladstone's Egeria. Mr. Stephen Graham (writing, one assumes, out of his inner consciousness) goes a little further than that. 'The great Liberal,' he declares, 'the man who, whatever his virtues, and despite his high religious fervour, yet committed Liberalism to anti-clericalism and secularism,[2] learned from her to pronounce the phrase "Holy Russia." He esteemed her. With his whole spiritual nature he exalted her. She was his Beatrice and to her more than anyone in his life he brought flowers. Morley has somehow omitted this in his biography of Gladstone. Like so many intellectual Radicals, he is afraid of idealism. But in truth the key to the more beautiful side of Gladstone's character might have been found in his relationship to Madame Novikoff.'

Whatever degree of truth there may be in Mr. Graham's contentions, it is certain that although Lord Morley in his great book devotes only four meagre lines to Madame Novikoff's personality, she counted for much in Gladstone's life from 1876 onwards. After the death of her brother in the autumn of that year she had written to a number of her English friends, Gladstone and Sir William Harcourt among them, urging them to do what they could to prevent England from countenancing further the barbarities of the Turks. To what extent was her letter to Gladstone instrumental in inspiring his pamphlet? Stead discusses the point thus in *The M.P. for Russia:*

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[1] Stead comments modestly in *The M.P. for Russia*: 'Woe is me! But I was born so and the Ethiopian cannot change his skin nor the leopard his spots.'

[2] Mr. Gladstone, when he came in his reading to some proposition which he was inclined to dispute, used to write on the margin of his book 'Ma – ,' the Italian for 'But – .' I think he would have written a very emphatic 'Ma – ' against this!

'It is possible that that pamphlet might have been written even if Nicholas Kiréeff had never sacrificed his life in the cause of Slavonic freedom, or if Madame Novikoff had never made her passionate appeal and impeachment; but there is little reason for doubt that the arrival of Madame Novikoff's letter at a time when Mr. Gladstone was feeling, like the rest of his countrymen, the full force of the spasm of horror created by MacGahan's letters, contributed much to the intense fervour and passion with which Mr. Gladstone arraigned the Turkish policy of Lord Beaconsfield. In writing his pamphlet he was not merely discharging a great duty, a duty he owed to outraged humanity, he was also satisfying his chivalrous nature by supplying the best of all balms to the broken heart of Nicholas Kiréeff's sister.'

And in his review of Morley's *Life of Gladstone* (*Review of Reviews*, 1903), Stead wrote:

'It is quite possible to read Mr. Morley's narrative of the part played by Mr. Gladstone in the Eastern Question from 1876 to 1880 without realizing the significance of the share of Madame Novikoff in that movement. No one, for instance, would imagine from the staid and restrained pages of Mr. Morley's book that during the whole of this trying time, when Mr. Gladstone, as he told us, was doing his utmost to counterwork the policy of Lord Beaconsfield, he was in close and constant communication with Madame Novikoff; that the two acted together with singular harmony of purpose; that in questions relating to their common cause they acted in co-operation after consultation; and that Mr. Gladstone was brave enough and true enough to the best interests of his country never to be afraid of identifying himself, publicly and privately, with the lady whom Lord Beaconsfield in a witty phrase described as "the Member for Russia." In nothing does the remarkable courage and chivalry of Mr. Gladstone shine out in more marked contrast with the mean timidity of other public men than in his readiness to co-operate with Madame Novikoff in counsel and in action in opposition to the Government of his own country, when in his judgment that Government was betraying the cause of justice and humanity. I can well imagine the exultant yell of indignation which would have arisen from the Jingo journals, from 1877 to 1880, if the close co-operation between Mr. Gladstone and Madame Novikoff had been brought out in all its fulness at that time. Not a few pseudo-Liberals of the baser sort would have been profoundly disgusted to find how far their leader had "compromised" himself with this "Russian agent." Madame Novikoff was not a Russian agent; she was a Russian patriot who was often in vehement opposition to her own Government, and who was heart and soul in the cause of the oppressed Slavs, in whose defence her brother had laid down his life.'

III

STEAD AND SOME OF HIS CORRESPONDENTS, 1876–80: GLADSTONE, FREEMAN, FROUDE, DEAN CHURCH, CANON LIDDON

Stead preserved some scores of letters which he received during these years from Gladstone, W. E. Forster, Chamberlain, Freeman, Froude, and other protagonists in the struggle. They do not tell us much about Stead, but they are worth glancing at for a moment. They contain many expressions of approval and admiration of the *Northern Echo* and of Stead's efforts generally. 'It is a great honour to the men of Darlington,' Gladstone writes on a postcard dated September 3, 1876, 'to have been so early and forward in giving expression to the feelings of the nation and the world.' A year later he declares that he never reads the *Northern Echo* without the wish that our whole Press was distinguished equally with it 'for justice, heartiness and ability.'

The Gladstone communications are of less interest than might be expected. Freeman's letters are much livelier reading by reason of their revelation of his own pugnacious personality. In Stead he hails a kindred spirit – as we might say, a 'bruiser' and a brother! He is unceasingly enthusiastic over the *Northern Echo*. 'How you do speak out!' he exclaims gleefully in September 1877, 'As no Cockney dares!' Sometimes he eggs Stead on: 'Cry aloud and spare not!' he writes in one letter, also about this time. 'The battle is very largely between England and London "Society" and all that – all that reaches its climax at Stafford House.' He delights especially in Stead's onslaught on 'the Jew' – Freeman always speaks of Beaconsfield as 'the Jew' – in one place adding 'and spoon-stealer,' in allusion to current gossip about 'Dizzy' having developed kleptomania in his old age. . . . Poor Freeman! In the midst of the great conflict in which he is fighting so vigorously and valiantly and from high impersonal motives for the most part, he continually displays emotions which are – well, unheroic. It annoys him to be called a follower of Gladstone – he was, he maintains, a pro-Russian in 1854 when Gladstone was being in part responsible for the Crimean War. The *Daily News* will never quote any of his articles or lectures, though it will quote any Tom, Dick or Harry who can put M.P. after his name. In any other country but England he would be in Parliament himself, but he supposes he will never get in anywhere as he 'can't spend heaps of money.' His well-known abhorrence of Froude comes out amusingly – it irritates him to have Froude on his side in the fray. But in essentials, and taken as a whole, they are fine, public-spirited, unselfish letters – worthy of the man who wrote them and of the man to whom they were written.

Froude's letters are characteristically gloomy. At this time he was as severe as Freeman on the Tory Premier. 'Don't relax your exertions,' we find him writing to Stead in January 1878, 'the danger is as great as ever. Lord B's political reputation is at stake and you do not know him if you think he will submit tamely.' Beaconsfield is old, he says in another letter, and cannot last at the head of things much longer, 'and what may we not expect from the blundering blockheads whom he will leave behind him?' Long ago Carlyle had insisted that Parliamentary government was doomed – 'it seems as if the end was drawing on us in a form which he as little as any of us anticipated.' Politicians – 'the class of persons who have been in office all my life' – were a detestable race. 'The Devil will take them away at last. Meanwhile it matters little to a drifting ship *who* is at the helm. . . . All we can do is to take it out of the hands of a deliberate schemer like the late Premier who would upset us for his own vanity.'

The letters from which these last sentences are taken were written in April 1880, after Gladstone's victory. In course of time, as we know from the monograph on Lord Beaconsfield which he wrote in 1890, Froude was able to take a more lenient view of that most strange genius.

Among Stead's closest correspondents and most valued friends at this period – drawn to him by his fervour against the Turks – were three very distinguished Churchmen, Dean Stanley of Westminster, Dean Church of St. Paul's, and Canon Liddon, then of Oxford, but with two or three exceptions their letters to him are less interesting than his own account of them and of his relations with them, as given at various periods in the *Review of Reviews* and elsewhere.[1] It was a leading article in the *Northern Echo*, in November 1877, entitled 'Church and Dissent and the Eastern Question,' which brought him into communication with the Dean of St. Paul's. Some passages from this article deserve transcription here. They are good examples of Stead's militancy:

' "I am a member of the Church of England," said Mr. Gladstone at Holyhead on Monday. "I am a decided and convinced member of the Church of England. I have been there all my life, and there I trust I shall die. But that will not prevent me from bearing an emphatic testimony to this: that the cause of justice, the cause of humanity, of mercy, of right, of truth for many millions of God's creatures in the East of Europe, has found its best, its most consistent, and its most unanimous supporters in the Nonconformist Churches of the land." We can understand and sympathize with Mr. Gladstone's disappointment. Eighteen months ago we believed we saw for the first time in the history of the Established Church the awakening of a genuine human sympathy of a disinterested enthusiasm for liberty, beneath the cerements of ecclesiasticism and the trappings of the Establishment. The Church of England at last appeared as if she were about to take the lead in the great awakening of the national conscience and make herself really the exponent of all that was noblest and best in the national heart. Had the Church of England been true to her Divine Founder at that crisis of the history of the world, the success of the Liberation Society, if ever it did succeed, must have been postponed for many generations. For a time it seemed as though she would be true.'

'The Archbishop of York, the Bishops of Manchester and Exeter, Dean Stanley, Canon Liddon, and Dean Church assured us that a great body of the clergy were at one with them on this question.

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[1] See, for instance, his character-sketch of Dean Church in the *Review of Reviews* for January 1891, and 'Reminiscences of Canon Liddon' in *The Young Man* for October 1896.

Silently proclaiming a "truce of God" upon the much debated question of Church and State, we applied ourselves diligently to cement the alliance between the Church and the people in the new crusade. Once the militant organ of aggressive Liberationism, we have sedulously refrained from any but unavoidable references to the State Church. The overthrow of the Turk was worth purchasing even by a new lease of life to the State Church; the crusade against the Establishment was postponed indefinitely in favour of the crusade against the Sultan. But the temporary reconciliation was but evanescent. The ruling principle of the English Church asserted itself as soon as the first burst of horror had spent itself, and the clergy, as a body, became passive supporters of the iniquity against which they had eagerly protested. Some of them even spoke and preached against the cause of emancipation, and it speedily became evident that, even on a question on which everything was calculated to assist them in breaking with the foul tradition of an evil past, they were not to be relied upon in the cause of freedom and of right. The dream of a really National Church, the exponent of the deepest moral and spiritual impulses of the National heart, faded away, and in its place there remained but the old organization for the culture of ecclesiastical arrogance and the obstruction of political progress. This lamentable apostasy of the clergy when the question ceasing to be emotional became political, or, in other words, practical, will strike temperaments in different ways. To the politician pure and simple, who is neither Puritan nor Atheist, the spectacle presented is a most instructive one. Fifty thousand men are lying dead in the East at this hour who would have been living if there had been no Established Church. At a great crisis in the history of humanity, the influences of reactions, accumulating for centuries in a politico-ecclesiastical institution, have warped the generous impulse of the English heart, and silenced the still small voice of the Christian conscience. As a consequence we have this war, which is but one among the many evils resultant from the establishment in every parish of a centre of resistance to political progress and of opposition to the development of our race.'

Stead's rather violent rebuke stirred Dean Church into a spirited reply. The clergy of the Church of England, he pointed out, were cross-divided on the Russo-Turkish question in much the same way as the Liberal Party was, and for the same reasons. Many of them thought – utterly wrongly, he himself felt – but quite honestly – that the Russians would be as hostile to good government as the Turks. What had to be overcome was the ignorance of the people who held this view. And he appealed to Stead to abstain from such wild assertions as that about the slaughter of the '50,000 Easterners' – 'one of those rhetorical extravagances which, at this time of day, and in a paper like yours, make one throw up one's hands in despair. It is the sort of rhetoric which unbelievers use against Christianity itself.'

Dean Stanley, who in the autumn of 1876 had been one of the strongest of the Anti-Turks but whose feelings had become modified during the Russo-Turkish war, was also roused into self-defence. He was not one of those who loved the Turks, he protested. He thought that the dissolution of the Turkish Empire would in all probability be a benefit to humanity – but, apart from other considerations involved, he could not 'so far forfeit his inborn feelings as an Englishman as not to respect a nation fighting for its independence, nay, for its very existence, against an invading army in a cause which is not rendered the less holy for the combatants because they are of a different religion from ourselves and because their civilization and policy are far below our own.'

Canon Liddon had been fired with Anti-Turkish zeal as early as the spring of 1876 when, travelling in Bosnia with Canon Malcolm M'Coll, he and his friend witnessed what seemed to them appalling evidence of Turkish brutality. From the pulpit of St. Paul's he had denounced the oppressors with a vehemence which had satisfied even Stead. Canon Liddon had many ties, chiefly ecclesiastical, with the Russian and Eastern churches, Stead tells us, 'and he had a strong theological animus against the followers of the False Prophet.' This marked him out to be the ecclesiastical leader of the crusade. Stead's first meeting with Liddon was accidental. 'It was in the summer of 1878,' Stead writes, 'Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury were still at Berlin, going through the solemn farce of bringing the Treaty of San Stefano into accord with the previously-arranged provisions of the secret memorandum which had been signed by Lord Salisbury and Count Schouvaloff. Feeling that the danger of war was past, I had gone north to Oban with my wife for a holiday, and it was when we were leaving the town we met Canon Liddon, who with a companion found himself, like ourselves, crowded out of the coach which was leaving Oban for Dalmally. At first we did not recognize each other, but I introduced myself, and we agreed to hire a private conveyance which would take us to Dalmally, where we were to catch the train south. He was on his way to Dumfermline, and I was returning home. During that long drive, some sixteen or twenty miles, I had my first experience of the charm of Canon Liddon as a conversationalist. We had certainly enough to talk about: the sympathy born of companionship in the crusade, the anxieties and tragic horrors of the war; our devotion to Mr. Gladstone and our detestation of Lord Beaconsfield, gave us many points in common and I have seldom enjoyed a drive so much.'

The two did not meet again until 1880, when Stead was considering whether he should leave Darlington to become Mr. John Morley's assistant on the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The text 'Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers' was much on his mind and he decided to take counsel with both Canon Liddon and Dean Church, now colleagues at St. Paul's.

'I found them both of the same opinion (he continues). Neither of them had any doubts as to the advisability of my coming up to London, provided that other things could be arranged satisfactorily. They were both extremely kind. I remember Dean Church, speaking with the fatherly sympathy that always distinguished him, saying, "It is a momentous choice: I do hope that you may be guided right." Whereupon I said to him, "Of course I shall; you have not any doubt about that, have you?" "Well," said he, "you are in some doubt yourself as to your course at present?" "Yes," I said, "that is true, because the moment for my decision has not yet arrived; but I am quite certain that unless this experience is to be unlike all those I have gone through before, when the time comes I shall see my duty perfectly clearly." I remember Dean Church looking at me with a somewhat wistful smile on his face when he shook hands and said, "What a happy man you must be!"

'I went from the Deanery to Amen Court, where I found Canon Liddon, whose advice Dean Church had especially urged me to seek. I put the matter before him. He said at once, "I should say that a Christian should think more of the possible influence for good he may have upon the unbeliever than about the possible influence for good the unbeliever may have upon him, always providing that you feel strong enough to hold your own. Remember, Mr. Morley is a strong man, and nothing could be more disastrous than that anything should shake your faith. Otherwise," said he, "I certainly think you would do well to come." Then I said to him, "Dean Church made a remark just now which rather puzzled me." I then went over the conversation, and said the Dean evidently seemed to think there was something exceptional in my experience. "Now," I went on, "I have been taught from the time when I was a child, that the promise in the Proverbs 'Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, lean not unto thine own understanding, in all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths,' was a straight promise that meant what it said, and could be relied upon to be fulfilled if you did your part." "Certainly," said Canon Liddon. "Well," I continued, "I am quite sure of this: I don't want to do anything in this matter that is not God's wish, and if I use all the faculties He has given me, in order to ascertain what will be best, and am willing to go or stay just as He wishes, then it seems to me I am justified in expecting that He will at least tell me what He wants, plainly and clearly. At any rate," I said somewhat laughingly, "I should feel somewhat swindled if He didn't."

'The Canon laughed, for he was always very tolerant of any irreverence of form which only masked earnestness of conviction, and we parted.'

When, eventually, Stead came to London, Dean Church asked him to take Canon Liddon out for a walk every Monday during the time he was in residence at St. Paul's – the Canon was so absent-minded, so absorbed in his own thoughts, that he needed a companion to save him from being run over in London's crowded streets. Stead was delighted to undertake this agreeable task and used to turn up regularly at Amen Corner every Monday at two o'clock.

'Our walks (Stead writes) extended usually as far as Lambeth Palace, across the river at Westminster Bridge, and along the Embankment, that runs between St. Thomas's Hospital and the river. Very pleasant were these Monday afternoon walks, for there was between us just sufficient sympathy on a sufficient number of subjects to make us understand and sympathize with those things in each other on which we differed as far as the poles. . . . We used to discuss everything in heaven and earth; and to me, coming as I did into his presence fresh from getting the *Pall Mall Gazette* to press, it was as if I had stepped suddenly from the heart of the nineteenth century into the Middle Ages. . . . Liddon belonged to a fast-vanishing past. It was not so much anything that he said that could be quoted as indicative of this mediævalism of his mind, but the note of his talk, the standpoint from which he habitually judged things, seemed to me always a curious anachronism in the midst of the hurry and worry and turmoil of these busy days.'

IV

STEAD AND CARLYLE

In Miss Estelle Stead's Memoir, of which I have so often to make mention in these early chapters, the most important passages have been transcribed from her father's contemporary account of his first visit to Carlyle in Cheyne Row on October 29, 1877, piloted by Madame Novikoff. The original manuscript, neatly sewn together in booklet shape, still exists. It contains one passage of interest not previously printed. Stead mentions that the maid-servant who opened the door to the two visitors eyed them suspiciously at first, 'and,' he proceeds, ' – it may have been only my fancy – intended to shut me out while admitting my friend. I pressed in, however, feeling very keenly I deserved to be shut out.' Somebody – not Miss Stead – drew a disapproving pencil through these confessions, but they are really too characteristic not to be disclosed. The suspicions of that Chelsea maid-servant were to be shared subsequently by the guardians of several other London homes which Stead visited, as he was always ready to note in the same tolerant, amused fashion. A sense of humour is a great help in these little humiliations. One feels sure that Lord Salisbury was able to enjoy – at least retrospectively – his experience in being refused admittance once to the Casino at Monte Carlo on the ground that his costume was not *en règle*. Stead, who had not an imposing presence like Lord Salisbury, was often a victim to such rebuffs. Two very typical instances come to mind and may be recorded here though they belong to a much later period. The first was on the occasion of a dinner party at the Burlington Hotel, in Cork Street, given by Cecil Rhodes. Stead often dined with Rhodes at the Burlington, but the hall porter that evening was a substitute and, never having seen this unlikely-looking guest, who did not even wear evening dress like the others, was strongly disinclined to let him in until Stead succeeded in convincing him that there would be 'a jolly old row' if he didn't!

The second instance was at Lord Rosebery's house in Berkeley Square – and in this case apparently 'a jolly old row' did ensue ! Lord Rosebery had been particularly anxious to see Stead and had begged him to call at noon. But the footman, not having been warned that a visitor was expected and knowing that his master, never very accessible, was exceptionally busy that morning, decided to follow his own aristocratic instincts and assured Stead that 'his lordship' was 'not at home'! 'A footman of phenomenal perversity,' Lord Rosebery characterized him that afternoon in a note full of apology and distress, repeating the invitation for another day. 'If you agree to this,' he added, 'I shall sit in the porter's chair till you arrive'!

Nothing very noteworthy was said by Carlyle at that first interview, but he seems to have been very courteous and charming to his two visitors. Madame Novikoff had spoken of his 'darling little face,' and the phrase had astonished Stead, but now the words sounded to him not incongruous. It was a 'little' face and the term of endearment also seemed excusable. What struck Stead most was the brilliant brightness and blueness of the old man's eyes and the remarkable ruddiness of his cheeks. There was nothing in the least morose or miserable about Carlyle's aspect or bearing on this occasion – 'nothing but kindly mirth and ready sympathy.' On political matters he held forth as violently as was his wont. The talk was principally about Russia and the Turks – 'an utterly corrupt set of scoundrels and irreclaimable savages,' Carlyle called the latter, 'as bad as the Red Indians.'

At the moment the issue of the Russo-Turkish War was still in suspense. A fortnight later Plevna had fallen, and Stead called again to tell Carlyle about Lord Beaconsfield's rumoured intention to intervene and save the Sultan. This news set Carlyle declaiming afresh. 'The Turk,' he said, 'has lain there for four centuries and more without doing a single good thing for the world or for the lands he laid himself down upon. He has never been anything but a destroyer from first to last. The only good thing he ever did was to destroy the Lower Empire. They were a bad lot of men, those Greeks, not much better than the Turks, with their lawyer-like intellects, wrangling and discussing over subtleties and forms of words and forgetting their duties until the Turk came and swept them away. Since then he has simply been a curse and a scourge to the lands he overran. And now his hour has come. It is sheer downright Bedlamism,' he went on wrathfully, 'for Lord Beaconsfield or anyone else to try to save the Turk. To drag this country into arms against Russia is the damnablest course ever suggested to the English nation in the whole course of history. And to save the Turk! Sir, the Turk is on the verge of Hell and no one but God Almighty can save him now.'

Of the Russians, he said: 'I have long had a much greater respect for that people than for all the other nations of Europe, for they have a clearer hold of the great truth that obedience to the rightful authority is a sacred duty.'

Then followed a long, typically Carlylean disquisition upon the Tory Premier and the idiocy of the Balloting system, which made such politicians as Beaconsfield and Gladstone the first in the State. 'The Parliamentary system is a delusion!' he cried; 'I have always said so and it is beginning to be seen to be so. This summoning of all the blatant cranks and noisy demagogues in the whole country to St. Stephen's and saying to them – 'Talk, talk, and be a Government!'

As for Beaconsfield's threatened move against Russia, it was Stead's duty, Carlyle held, to raise the standard of revolt. 'Every English citizen,' he declared, 'is bound to prevent so great a crime by every means in his power.'[1]

On the occasion of the third and last meeting, in October 1878, one afternoon when Madame Novikoff was unwell and could not join Carlyle on a promised drive, Stead took her place in the carriage. The talk was desultory – Carlyle's voice was low and Stead heard him with difficulty. They passed Regent's Park and the Zoological Gardens, which Carlyle said he had visited only once – the sight of a little trembling mouse fascinated by the gaze of a snake had so haunted him that he vowed never to return.

Stead's notes of all three interviews are copious – they would fill thirty or forty pages such as these. A fuller gleaning from them may one day be made by some Carlylean enthusiast, but they add little to what we know of the wonderful old man as Talker, whether from Froude or from such sympathetic friends as Tyndall and Moncure

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[1] In his record of this talk Stead cites an interesting disclosure made by Carlyle to Madame Novikoff with reference to the famous occasion when the MS. of the first volume of the French Revolution was destroyed through the carelessness of J. S. Mill's housemaid. Although Carlyle made as little as possible of the catastrophe to Mill he was, he told Madame Novikoff, 'for a week like a man in a fit.' He could not 'eat, sleep, or think.'

Conway and Sir Charles Gavan Duffy – to mention only three of his best listeners. One more citation, therefore, will suffice us – Stead's last memory of that three hours' drive through London:

> 'The long drive drew near to its close. "There is no more work for me to do," said Mr. Carlyle. "I cannot write. It was a sore trial to me when I could no longer guide my pen. If I try, my fingers give a great splurt over the paper and I have to give it up. I used rather to like my handwriting, but that is all passed. I cannot dictate. When I have tried, I never can say what I want. I use twice as many words and don't make my meaning half as clear. I must just wait and suffer until I am called hence. I have often asked myself whether it would not be right to take oneself off and put an end to this wearisome waiting, but I have never been able to see it in that light. The idea that each of us is a soldier on duty till he is dismissed, and that no one has a right to desert has had great influence with me. I must just wait. I am an old man. It is not for me to say anything more. I must employ what time is still left to me to meet the Eternal." '

V

STEAD AND AUBERON HERBERT

A letter which Stead addressed on August 23, 1877, to the Earl of Carnarvon, then Colonial Secretary, began a very interesting and agreeable relationship. In this rather venturesome epistle he applauded the Earl at the expense of Lord Beaconsfield's other colleagues. It was a letter not very easy to answer, for Lord Carnarvon's position in the Cabinet was becoming more and more difficult, but he replied courteously and frankly. 'Although I have not the pleasure of a personal acquaintance,' he wrote on August 27, 'your name is known to me and I have thought I might write in the full confidence that my answer will be treated as strictly private.' He was unable, he said, to accept Stead's unfavourable view of the other members of the Government, and he feared that the time had not yet come when England could intervene to restrain the Turks, but he agreed that the massacres in Bulgaria were 'amongst the most frightful events which this generation has seen.'

This interchange of opinions led not only to a most pleasant friendship with Lord Carnarvon himself, but also to a delightful intimacy with a delightful 'character' – Mr. Auberon Herbert, the Earl's younger brother. Lord Carnarvon's subsequent letters have their value for political students of that period, but except for some casual references to visits which Stead paid him at Highclere and one or two little London dinner parties at which he was a guest, they have no interest biographically; to read Auberon Herbert's, on the other hand, is to see Stead vividly from another angle.

Mr. Auberon Herbert was an English aristocrat of a type even more exceptional than Mr. Albert Grey. The world of rank and fashion could smile tolerantly on Grey, that 'Paladin of Empire' as his friends loved to call him: he atoned for what were held to be his impracticable fads and enthusiasms by being not only a great imperialist but also an all-round sportsman, and by living the orthodox life of 'a fine old English Gentleman.' Auberon Herbert, a first-rate shot and bold rider in his youth, an Etonian, an Oxonian, an officer in the 7th Hussars, a Conservative candidate for Parliament, left the army before he was twenty-five, abandoned 'sport,' took to vegetarianism and teetotalism, became first a Radical and then a Republican (his maiden speech in the House of Commons almost provoking a riot), and in a score of other directions transgressed the accepted rules and regulations of the world in which he had been brought up. He was a *franc-tireur* in the political and social conflicts of England from the early 'seventies until his death in 1906, almost invariably on the unpopular side; backing up Joseph Arch and his Agricultural Labourers' Union in 1872; applauding Bradlaugh throughout his long fight with Parliament; one of Stead's most ardent sympathizers in the 'Maiden Tribute' Crusade of 1885. An altogether outrageous person he seemed to the conventional and respectable, but he was annoyingly clever and incontestably brave. In the Prusso-Danish War of 1864 he had distinguished himself by his daring efforts to help the Danish wounded, and had been created a Knight of the Order of the Dannebrog. At Oxford he had made his mark in half a dozen ways – he had been President of the Union, had founded the Canning and Chatham Debating Clubs, had been one of the most brilliant members of the group inspired by Ruskin, and later had been Lecturer in History and Jurisprudence at St. John's. After Oxford he had become a friend and disciple of Herbert Spencer. In 1877, when Stead first met him, he considered himself 'done with politics' and was living as a farmer near Lymington in the New Forest – 'living the simple life,' as we have come to call it, in a fashion of his own, and practising a kind of hospitality never before seen in England. Anybody and everybody were welcome to his 'High Teas.' The number of his guests grew from half-dozens to hundreds, the local gypsies coming in for all the food that was left over.

Most of Herbert's letters are from Ashley Arnewood Farm, Lymington. Others are from Dalmally, near the banks of Loch Awe. To both of these homes he was constantly urging Stead to come on a visit. We can imagine how enjoyable must have been holidays in such retreats with such a host, or, as sometimes happened, all alone. 'Stay a month,' Herbert writes to him on one occasion, when Stead is alone at the Dalmally house, Larich Ban, 'stay a month and you will be like a giant refreshed with wine – able to do more mischief than you have ever done in the whole of the past.' And after Stead has returned to town follow these words of excellent advice: 'I hope you won't throw away all the good effects by unnecessary overwork – you should run "cunning; not round every corner that every conceivable hare takes."'

That, in truth, was Stead's persistent weakness – he always wanted to be after all the hares at once.

Very few of Auberon Herbert's letters are fully dated, and often one can only guess at the year in which they were written, but they are nearly all in the same vein – cheeky messages from his children alternating with his own violent attacks on the professional politicians, and bits of amusing self-portraiture, and warm commendations of, or home-thrusts at, Stead.

'You have a dashing unscrupulousness about you that I cannot imitate,' he writes in connection with some movement in which he feels that Stead's methods are at fault. 'You are still a politician and want to win a twenty-four-hour fight. I am only a croaker by the roadside, but I hope to leave a grain of seed behind me.'

An artist in words himself when writing for publication, he rebels sometimes against Stead's rough and ready editing of his articles – he became a not infrequent contributor to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the 'eighties. To cut another man's sentences, he declares, is as much a crime as to cut his flesh. 'A man's sentence is part of him, if he thinks or cares at all about what he writes.'

Often he feels that Stead goes too far in his pro-Russianism. 'I am very glad you are having a row with Madame Novikoff,' we find him declaring in a January letter – possibly in 1878 or 1879, more probably in 1885, 'because whilst I think it is well there should be someone like yourself who sees the good side of Russia and sympathizes with her, your right line is to keep your independence of judgment and frankness of speech absolutely, and to say unflinchingly the things that have to be said.' Even if Stead's favourable view of Russia be, on the whole, right, there must still, he feels, be much that is bad and rotten in the country. No race could be half civilized, 'or, rather, have grown quickly into modern civilization,' without this rotten side. 'It might be pure and untainted in a certain fashion, but it remained barbaric; but the two sides have met, and there must be an awful lot of sewage washing about.'

He writes to commend much oftener than to criticize. 'It is a splendid statement,' he declares in one letter of some article of Stead's – there is no date or other clue by which to identify it – 'clear, luminous, direct, as nervous as a prize-fighter's arm.' And of another – a *Pall Mall* leader, this: 'I thought "In the Breach" splendid – as fine and effective a bit of English as the heart of man could desire.' These few extracts from Auberon Herbert's letters suffice to show us what an invaluable friend he must have been. It is a pity we have no memories from Stead's own pen of his many visits to the New Forest home. The Loch Awe holidays were exceptional, but pilgrimages to Lymington became quite a habit when Stead and his family settled in London. Sometimes Stead, with his wife and two elder boys, would stay at Ashley Arnewood Farm itself, sometimes in a cottage placed entirely at their disposal. They drove the whole way from Wimbledon in a little pony-cart, putting up at a wayside inn *en route*. Stead took the reins. We must imagine the rest – Stead in uproarious high spirits and hail-fellow-well-met with every waggoner or wayfarer on the road – Mrs. Stead concerned, perhaps, like Mrs. Gilpin, with household considerations – the boys as happy as their father. And then the warm welcome and the unconventional surroundings, the beauty and peace of the forest. . . . We have no details, and, in any case, this is looking ahead. We must return for a moment more to Darlington and the 'seventies.

VI

STEAD'S READING IN THE 'SEVENTIES

We have seen, in Chapter 1, some of Stead's memories of his early reading. A big foolscap-shaped note-book begun by him in October

1870, kept up regularly until December 1874, but not actually completed until 1879, will give us another glimpse at his progress as a literary student. The handwriting shows a marked change after the middle of 1871. Until then it is a regular clerk's hand – a sort of angular copper-plate; while from August of that year onwards it is rounder and less careful and very much less legible: on many pages it is quite identifiable with the familiar 'fist' so often reproduced in facsimile in the *Review of Reviews*. This note-book is entirely devoted to extracts and summaries from books which he has been reading. During the first half of 1871, while still at Newcastle, he seems to have read nearly thirty substantial books and some issues of the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh* and other reviews into the bargain – a remarkable record for a young clerk. Prominent in his list for these six months are the first two volumes of Cobden's *Political Writings*, Tocqueville's *Memoirs*, Taine's *History of English Literature*, and several works on America, beginning with Mrs. Trollope's. Readers of Anthony Trollope's fascinating Autobiography will recall something of that vivacious book by the novelist's mother – her first, to be followed by a hundred and fifty more! Mrs. Trollope's extremely uncomplimentary description of the 'Domestic Manners' which she observed in the United States were not at all to the taste of young William Stead, already at one and twenty an ardent preacher of Anglo-American brotherhood. He condemns his sharp-tongued countrywoman severely and characterizes some portions of her volume as 'most ridiculous.'

Here and there, as one turns over the leaves of the ledger-like note-book, one comes across sentences copied out or passages commented on, which show us how Stead's mind is working. From an article on Mazzini by the devoted Mme. Venturi in the *Contemporary Review* he takes the axiom: 'Every good thought and desire which you do not endeavour, come what may, to translate into action, is a sin': and there is a big pencil cross against it to imprint it upon his mind.

A *dictum* of Bagehot's is recorded – it will come back to us when we find Stead exciting himself, in 1891 and 1896 particularly, over the future of the Prince of Wales. Hard work, Bagehot held, must not be expected from a king who comes to the throne middle-aged after long years of idleness.

Russia, of course, is well to the fore. Of a book on Russia by H. Barry, published in 1870 – one of half a dozen such works which he has read – he notes that it comes as a valuable corrective to Hepworth Dixon's, which was 'full of misrepresentations,' and he welcomes it as giving English readers the truth about a people whose 'future importance it is impossible to realize.'

Most of the books are of an entirely serious nature – biographies, histories, important works of travel, political treatises, etc.; but time is found also for lighter literature. He reads Mark Twain and Bret Harte, *Gynx's Baby*, and the *Wit and Wisdom* of Sydney Smith, some of whose very best things are duly transcribed. What admirable things they are! Here is one which Stead himself had no need to take to heart – for one can think of few less insular Englishmen – but which is still salutary for his countrymen in general: 'They are content with Magna Charta and Trial by Jury and think they are not bound to excel the rest of the world in small behaviour if they are superior to them in great institutions.'

Stead reads Thackeray also and Bulwer Lytton and George Eliot. He weeps 'bitterly' over the last chapter of *The Last Days of Pompeii* and loses his heart to Caroline Gann in *A Shabby-Genteel Story*. He is impressed by Thackeray's 'acheing heart' and his sympathy with women. 'What was done to the man taken in adultery?' he quotes from one of the great novelist's books. 'Where was he? Happy no doubt and easy in mind, and regaling some choice crony over a bottle with the history of his success.' Stead is glad to be far from the world in which Thackeray's characters have their being – glad to be in the remote country, 'not in London, heartless as its stones.'

George Eliot does not come upon the scene during the years with which the note-book is chiefly concerned, but in a little appendix added in the autumn of 1879, in the very last entry. Stead has been reading *Daniel Deronda*. 'Read last half of Volume 4,' he records, 'and very much struck by resemblance between my character and Daniel's.'

Readers whose interest is piqued by this little bit of self-analysis will perhaps go back to that famous novel. They will find several touches of Stead in its hero, with his 'passion for people who are pelted,' his weakness 'for a lunatic, especially if he wanted defending,' his way of 'looking tenderly at the women.' And what poor, beautiful young Mirah exclaimed to Daniel, many such victims of life's cruelty were to have occasion to say to Stead: 'I did not believe there was any man so good. None before have ever thought me worthy of the best. You found me poor and miserable, yet you have given me the best.'

CHAPTER 4

THE *PALL MALL GAZETTE* UNDER MORLEY AND STEAD

October 1880–*August* 1883

I

THE *P.M.G.'S* EARLIER HISTORY[1]

MOST people, even most journalists, are rather hazy in their minds as to the exact connection between Thackeray and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. There is a widespread belief, for instance, that the phrase, 'written by gentlemen for gentlemen,' – the best-remembered sentence in Captain Shandon's prospectus for the paper described in *Pendennis* – was incorporated in the prospectus of the real paper which made its first appearance on February 7, 1865. As a matter of fact, the connecting of the actual *Pall Mall Gazette* with the great novelist, who had died two years earlier, was due to a happy afterthought. It was so christened to please Thackeray's shade, if possible, but in any case to please his daughter.

The project for the new journal had been submitted to Mr. George Smith, senior partner in the firm of Smith, Elder & Co., the publishers of Thackeray's novels and also of *The Cornhill*, by Mr. Frederick Greenwood, a young writer of promise who, in conjunction with G. H. Lewes, had been placed in charge of this famous periodical when Thackeray himself relinquished the editorship in 1862. The paper, as planned out by Greenwood, was to be so far as possible a reproduction, both in *format* and in literary style, of Canning's *Anti-Jacobin*, but instead of being a weekly it was to be a daily; a variety of titles for it had been under consideration, the one which Greenwood himself preferred being *The Evening Review*. It was Mr. Smith who eventually conceived the idea of calling it the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and Miss Anne Thackeray had caught eagerly at the suggestion – 'It would *so* please my father!' she exclaimed. Greenwood objected. There was almost nothing in common, he urged, between his *Anti-Jacobin* programme and the *Pall Mall Gazette* imagined by Thackeray; and the title would be not only misleading but provocative of tiresome jocularities. Mr. Smith, however, was resolute, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* it was to be.

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[1] My version of the story of the *Pall Mall Gazette's* early days is based principally on Stead's own, which was printed in the *Review of Reviews* in 1893 and which Mr. Greenwood had seen in proof. Eager excited study of the brilliant London journal may be regarded as completing Stead's education as an editor. He scrutinized its every page and paragraph during those years at Darlington, applauding its 'scoops' while deploring its politics.

Greenwood, having his hands quite comfortably full of work already, and not being of a very ambitious temperament, had not intended to become editor of the newspaper himself. He was anxious to secure for the post Mr. R. H. Hutton, who presently was to be so eminent as editor of the *Spectator*. Failing to get Hutton, he went in search of some as yet undiscovered genius among the struggling men of letters who in those days paid court to Thomas Carlyle. This quest bearing no fruit, he decided reluctantly to assume the editorial duties and for fifteen years he continued to perform them admirably.

The birth of the *Pall Mall Gazette* as a twopenny evening paper was thus somewhat scornfully recorded in the chronicle of the year 1865 printed in the *Morning Star*, a London penny daily which had been founded a few years earlier to support the policy of Cobden and Bright :

> 'Journalism has also received an accession in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, an evening paper professing to be conducted by scholars and gentlemen *par excellence*. We are ready to concede that its articles are generally written with polish and vigour, sometimes with eloquence, but they are unhappily too much pervaded by that sneering snobbism of which the *Saturday Review* is the recognized type. However, this tone of twopenny blood and culture, as it has been aptly called, may conciliate the prejudices of a class, it is not the way to permanent success. The moral dignity of a high purpose outweighs all the polished sneers and patronizing superciliousness of your *soi-disant* gentlemen and scholars.'

The editorial and publishing offices of the new journal, which of course was far more favourably received in less Radical circles, were in Salisbury Square, off Fleet Street, but it was printed at first in a warehouse at the river end of the old Adelphi arches, close to a so-called 'Half-penny Boat Pier' from which the porters carried fruit and vegetables up to Covent Garden Market. In those days the site of what we know as the Victoria Embankment was a weltering mass of muddy foreshore, covered at high water by the tide. To the 'Printer's devils' the business of conveying 'copy' and 'proofs' from the one building to the other was a joyous occupation as they splashed their way through the liquid slime. Later the printing was done in Chandos Street. It was not until the beginning of 1866, after Greenwood's first great journalistic *coup*, that both the printing, and also the editorial and publishing, offices were removed to the little old house in Northumberland Street, Strand (now demolished), which was to be the scene of Morley's and Stead's activities.

Those of us who have reached the wrong side of fifty can call back to memory something of that first *coup* of Greenwood's, for it continued to be talked about for many years afterwards, but most of our juniors, probably, have never heard of 'The Amateur Casual.' In January 1866, Frederick Greenwood, by a lucky inspiration, induced his brother James – like himself, a practised penman – to spend a night in a casual ward and describe his experiences in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, writing under the above pseudonym. What James Greenwood went through during a bitterly cold night in the hideous conditions of the ward was no worse, of course, than what fell to the lot of hundreds and thousands of homeless wretches throughout the whole winter, but to him and to the companion, Mr. Bittlestone, who shared in the enterprise, it was an experience of horror. Next morning Frederick Greenwood drove down to the neighbourhood in his carriage supplied with sandwiches and wine, ready to pick up the adventurers. Presently two miserable-looking objects appeared. 'I never saw,' he said afterwards, 'so great a change wrought in a single night in the appearance of any human beings. When they went in, they were well disguised, but any close observer would have perceived they were got up for the occasion. After spending sixteen hours in the cold, squalor, and obscene brutality of the casual ward, they seemed absolutely to have become confirmed tramps and vagabonds.' The article which resulted was a masterpiece of its kind. It appeared in three sections on successive days and became the talk of the town. The circulation of the paper, which had been under 2,000 copies, was doubled, and it was quoted from widely in the entire English Press. It was a magnificent success for the *Pall Mall*.

During the fourteen years that followed Frederick Greenwood steadily improved the status of the journal, making it more and more Conservative and finally shaping it into the favourite organ of the more intellectual Jingoes. Largely a self-educated man, Greenwood was a genuine book-lover as well as an ardent politician, and he collected round him a really distinguished staff of contributors.[1] He exerted great influence in Club-land and in well-to-do circles in London, but the *Pall Mall* never became under his editorship a paying concern; even after he had earned for himself a place in English history by persuading Disraeli to purchase the Suez Canal shares in November 1875 – thereby winning enhanced *prestige* for the paper – its sales remained inconsiderable. Mr. Smith was losing money on it every year. Eventually in 1880, the *Pall Mall Gazette* passed into the hands of the publisher's son-in-law, Mr. Henry Yates Thompson, a Liberal. Greenwood was indignant at Mr. Smith's action in this matter and not without good reason apparently. By his agreement he himself had a one-sixth proprietary share in the paper. He offered to buy Mr. Smith's five-sixths share for £10,000, feeling confident that he could raise this sum for the purpose. But Mr. Smith refused.

There ensued now a demonstration of esteem and goodwill towards the disconsolate editor on the part of his sympathizers which is without parallel in the history of English journalism. The day after Mr. Smith's refusal of his offer, Greenwood declared that he would at once start a new journal, and he went to the Garrick Club to think the matter over quietly. To his astonishment and intense gratification, drafts and cheques and promises of support kept pouring in on him at the Club all day. Among many who visited him in person was an unknown officer in the Guards, very diffident and embarrassed in manner, who came as an emissary from the Guards' Club with the sum of £1,100 which had been hastily subscribed there. Adding up that evening the total amount of drafts, cheques, and promises, Greenwood found that he could command no less a sum than £104,000! That was, indeed, a Red Letter Day in his career. As things turned out, he was to have no need of this almost magic money, for adequate capital was forthcoming from another source and in more prosaic fashion. Within a very brief period he was installed as editor of the *Pall Mall's* new rival, the *St. James's Gazette.*

It was quite a noteworthy rival in its more sedate way, but there will not be any occasion to mention it again in these pages, so it may be well at this point to cite some words written by Stead in 1909 when its first editor died. To younger men, he remarked, Frederick Greenwood was only a name, remembered chiefly in connection with the purchase of Suez shares and the discovery – in more modern times – of J. M. Barrie.

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[1] Among them, FitzJames Stephen, Leslie Stephen, G. H. Lewes, Anthony Trollope, Sir Henry Maine, Sir Samuel Baker, Emile de Laveleye, James Hannay, and George Meredith.

'But to the elders (Stead continued) Mr. Greenwood was much more than this. He was a subtle intellectual influence, cold and clear as the winter's sun, which at once illuminated and chilled the political enthusiasms of the day. He was a journalist's journalist in the days when journalism meant the serious discussion of national problems, and not the mere hunt after evanescent sensations. To him and to Mr. Hutton, of the *Spectator*, I owed more than to any other journalists of our time. They were both men of clear vision and plain speech. I detested Mr. Greenwood's Beaconsfieldian policy, but I read his paper through every night before going to bed.[1] The *Pall Mall Gazette* had, as I once phrased it to Mr. Gladstone, a most unfair monopoly of brains, a sentiment in which Mr. Gladstone most heartily concurred. Mr. Greenwood was a man who had only one hero—Lord Beaconsfield; only one bogey – Russia. His style was strong, virile, rather harsh and compelling than persuasive. In his later days he lived in comparative retirement. But he had sufficient of his old *flair* left to detest the South African War, and to see dimly the magnitude of the problems raised by the British alliance with Japan. He did a good day's work and did honour to his profession. Like many practical men, he had a deep mystical or psychic vein in him, but this only came out in his books or his talk. In his paper he eschewed all such subjects.'

II

MORLEY TAKES COMMAND. STEAD BECOMES ASSISTANT EDITOR

Mr. Greenwood took away with him most of his associates, and it is a bit of a mystery how Mr. Yates Thompson, who had no journalistic experience, contrived to keep the *Pall Mall Gazette* afloat during the first few weeks of his editorship. He gave early evidence, however, of his wisdom and discrimination by placing the journal under the control of a man of great distinction and transcendent ability, Mr. John Morley, the future Viscount Morley of Blackburn, then editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, with, as his chief of staff, W. T. Stead, as yet unknown to the world at large, but by reason of his Darlington exploits already famous in journalistic circles for his immense energy and efficiency, his untiring zeal, and his fervid temperament.

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[1] In the late 'seventies, at Darlington.

Lord Morley's own words, familiar to readers of his *Recollections*, must here be cited – he has been recording the change in the *Pall Mall Gazette's* fortunes: 'Of this gallant ship,' he says, 'I now undertook to be captain, under a liberal-minded and courageous owner, as loyal and bold as he was indulgent. We were lucky enough to induce to join us as an assistant a man from the north of England who, by and by, sailing under his own flag, became for a season the most powerful journalist in the island. Stead has said enough of our relations. He was invaluable; abounding in journalistic resource, eager in conviction, infinitely bold, candid, laborious in sure-footed mastery of all the facts and bright with a cheerfulness and geniality that no difference of opinion between us and none of the passing embarrassments of the day could for a moment damp. His extraordinary vigour and spirit made other people seem wet blankets, creatures of moral *défaillance*.'

And then comes the allusion to Stead's death, 'after a striking career that was not without melodramatic phases and some singular vagaries of mind' – a sentence pointing unmistakably to an attitude of strong, but not unfriendly, disapproval. 'I like the drab men best,' Lord Morley has elsewhere admitted. It was not to be expected that he should have much sympathy with most of Stead's flamboyant methods and ideas and aspirations.

The negotiations with 'the man from the north of England' begin with a letter from Mr. Yates Thompson dated July 24, 1880, saying that Mr. Morley might soon be in need of assistance on the *Pall Mall Gazette* and asking Stead whether there was any possibility of his 'being tempted to the Metropolis' as assistant editor of the paper. Mr. Thompson intimates that he has heard through Mr. W. E. Forster that Stead has had some thought already of coming to London. On August 18 – Stead having paid a hurried week-end visit to town in the meantime and having had an interview with Mr. Morley – Mr. Thompson writes in cordial terms definitely offering him the appointment on a year's agreement at a salary of £400 for the year and an additional ten shillings per column for all contributions from his pen inserted in the paper, guaranteeing that the total 'shall be not less than £700 for the said first year.'[1]

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[1] Morley's salary as editor is known to have been £2,000 a year.

In his replies to these two communications Stead shows himself keenly appreciative of the compliment involved, but in no mood to jump at the offer. In the first place, he declares, that he is by no means sure that he is qualified for the post. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, though Liberal now, is still 'redolent of Society and the Clubs,' whereas he is a 'barbarian of the North,' accustomed, moreover, to regard London life as 'destructive to vigour and earnestness' and 'steeped in cynicism and indifference.' In the second place, he has for nine years past had absolute control of the *Northern Echo* and this 'may not have been altogether the best training for undertaking subordinate duties as one of a large staff.'

Mr. Yates Thompson and Mr. Morley not being frightened by these protestations, he accepts the appointment, subject to a modification of the terms specified. He does not at all like the proposed arrangement in regard to payment 'per contribution.' 'The arrangement,' he declares, 'is most objectionable. Nothing could be more invidious than the position of an assistant editor who has to make up his salary by inserting his own contributions at ten shillings a column to the exclusion of the contributions of others who are paid four times the amount. I should be exposed to the imputation of black-legging and not altogether without cause. . . . My idea of the best arrangement would be for you to pay the whole sum as salary, stipulating that the duties of assistant editor shall include the writing of a stipulated number of columns per week, contributions over and above that limit to be paid for at the usual rate per column paid to other contributors.' This, he reckons, would bring his earnings up to £800 for the year, the lowest rate of income at which he could keep his family in due comfort in London. 'I should be very glad,' he continues, 'to work with Mr. Morley, who, I suppose, would be my sole chief. Although, of course, I should expect to enjoy the luxury of silence if ever I differed from him on any point, I would not hesitate to accord Mr. Morley a loyal and cordial obedience. Unity of command is as essential in a newspaper as on board ship. . . . There is no other newspaper editor in London whom I would leave the *Northern Echo* to serve, and I have no doubt that we shall be able to work in perfect accord.'

The terms actually agreed upon may be summarized as follows:

(1) A salary of £800 a year for one year, dating from the middle of October 1880.

(2) That W. T. S., except for one leader a week and an occasional note or letter for the *Northern Echo* until July 17, 1881 (the date on which his existing agreement with that paper would terminate), should give his 'whole energy and exclusive literary service' to the *P.M.G.*

(3) All details as to his duties to be a matter for arrangement between him and Mr. Morley.

(4) One month's holiday in the year.

(5) After the expiry of nine months of the first year, 'We are to meet and settle what shall take place at the end of the year.'

With Mr. Morley W. T. Stead's relations were to be very amicable from the moment of their first meeting. 'I most cordially reciprocate your kind and friendly words,' his future chief writes to him on August 12, 1880: 'I felt very soon that we should suit one another, for you are one of the few who mix the spirit of enthusiasm and of battle with judgment and sense. A very small company of men of that temper would work marvels – opportunity given.' Two days later, in reply to a note in which Stead apparently has touched regretfully on the happy aspects of his life in Darlington, Morley writes: 'I feel a terrible responsibility when I consider how much you forego – but I confess that the prospect of having you as a colleague in wrestling day by day with the Enemy makes me almost willing to undertake it. . . . I feel that to me it will make all the difference to have some one with whom I can discuss every day the line of the paper. My official friends are too busy, and, besides, my notion is that we should inspire them rather than they us.' Two remarks in letters dated August 18 and August 24 reveal the sympathetic anxiety with which he has followed the course of Stead's negotiations with the proprietor: 'Thompson is really anxious to do what is right and friendly,' he says in the first, 'so, while being as direct as you please, don't hurt his feelings'; and in the second, 'I am really glad that you feel more kindly towards our master. He is really a more considerate man than you might at first think. I do not quite understand the proposed system, but if it satisfies you and brings you fully into the governing circle of the paper that is enough for me. I do not believe there will be any hitch in the actual working, whatever may be the first tentative and provisional form. As soon as ever you have got your hand in I shall retire to the background to finish my Cobden.' One more extract from this preliminary correspondence has its interest – Morley has been explaining why he has been anxious to secure Stead's 'exclusive' services: 'You will not be hurt,' he adds, 'if I say that one consideration present to me is that you should have leisure for "coaling"; i.e. reading and meditating. We all need more of that than we get.'

Among a few other such detached notes in Stead's own handwriting which have been preserved, there is a brief record of his first Sunday morning as a guest in Morley's home, Berkeley Lodge, Putney. It is dated October 10, 1880. It will make a characteristic tail-piece to the above correspondence:

'Here I am at Mr. Morley's, the first Sunday which I have spent in London. It is Sunday morning. I am writing in my bedroom after breakfast. I came up last week straight from the *N. Echo* because the Eastern Question was becoming urgent. Mr. Morley was short-handed and I have been very hard put to it ever since; little sleep, little rest, horrible weather and a sense of strangeness combined to make my forehead feel heavy and mazed, and even now I don't know but the best thing would be for me to sleep again. I need a rest. I have had no holiday for thirteen months, and to write eight leaders a week, besides notes for thirteen months without a break is enough to wear down any man, especially when it is the last of nine years during which I have been writing every day. Mr. Morley says that my mental activity seems to him to be almost morbid. Perhaps it is. At present it is sluggish enough, so sluggish I can write no more and will at once go out to get freshened and seek a place of worship.'

III

STEAD'S PORTRAIT OF MORLEY

'Stead has said enough of our relations,' – the tolerant smile with which this remark was penned we can easily imagine. Sensitive and fastidious, weighing every word he himself wrote, Lord Morley could not but bring a somewhat critical spirit to the perusal of all the copious reminiscences of that period which Stead poured out incontinently during the years that followed. The two men differed in their methods of expression as much as in most other things. Stead used to write as fluently as he talked and, despite all the warnings of his first journalistic tutor, Mr. Copleston, he almost never revised his articles: they have the faults inseparable from improvisation; they have many and great merits, however; and in his character sketches, above all, he seldom failed to be extraordinarily vivid. Of Lord Morley he made several excellent pen-portraits at various dates, and from one of the best of these I shall cite some passages. Men's memories are short, and few of my elders or contemporaries will vote these extracts hackneyed. To the younger generation, to men and women in their twenties and thirties who know little of the John Morley of two-score years ago and to whom Stead himself is a personality associated only with Peace Crusades, his 'Brother Boers' and his 'Spooks,' these *Pall Mall* memories will be quite new – they were printed in November 1890:[1]

'I may be utterly wrong in my estimate of Mr. Morley's character (wrote Stead then), but at least I have had opportunities of studying it superior to those possessed by almost anyone else. For nearly three years I was his assistant while he edited the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and between an editor and an assistant editor there is necessarily the closest intimacy. Every morning we used to discuss the world, and all the things therein, for half an hour, the range being as wide as the universe, while the immediate objective point was narrowed down to the practical duty of bringing out the *Pall Mall Gazette*. We differed about everything – from the Providential government of the world to the best way of displaying the latest news in an "Extra Special"; and the strenuous conflict of opinion with which the day began led Mr. Morley at one time to postpone our talk till the paper was out. It took more out of him, that half-hour, he said, than all the rest of the day's work. But the postponement did not last, our morning palavers were soon resumed, and continued until the end. Nor was it only at the office that I had the best of opportunities for observation and study. When I first came up to London I enjoyed Mr. Morley's hospitality for several weeks; and after I settled at Wimbledon, we were for several years near neighbours and good friends. Not only did I see Mr. Morley every day – and sometimes all the day – for three years, but I was with him at the two most momentous crises of his history. I was by his side through the whole of the campaign against Coercion, which led to the retirement of Mr. Forster; and afterwards, when he decided to abandon journalism for the House of Commons, I had constant discussions with him upon the rival claims of the old career and the new. If, therefore, I do not know Mr. Morley, the fault is not in lack of opportunity; and if my estimate should differ somewhat from that which is generally current among men, I beg my reader to remember that I speak out of the fulness of a personal knowledge which few have been privileged to enjoy.'

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[1] *Review of Reviews* for 1890.

Stead proceeds to combat what he styles the 'great delusion' then prevailing as to Mr. Morley being 'an austere, stern, unsympathetic person – the incarnate genius of political righteousness':

'Mr. Morley (he declares) is a very human man, who is anything but the dry stick of an abstract philosopher which some have fancied him. Mr. Morley, it is true, has an austere physiognomy. "That nose," said a journalist who met him for the first time, "is powerful as a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow."[1] There is also in him, as he remarked about his hero Burke, "a certain inborn stateliness of nature" which keeps people at a distance. He does not "put on side" – as the slang phrase goes – for he does not need to. Nature did that for him without his taking thought, and created around him a certain zareba of awe which effectually wards off the unwarrantable intrusion of the profane vulgar. But there could not be a greater mistake than to confound this grave sedateness of demeanour with a chilly indifference to the deeper emotions. I remember at a dinner party many years ago, sitting next to the wife of a very distinguished Anglo-Indian. The conversation turned upon Mr. Morley. "I never could understand," she said, "why Mr. Morley went to Oxford. Cambridge must have so much greater attractions for him. Oxford appeals to the poetic and historic imagination. Its associations are an infinite charm. But, of course, all this is nothing to Mr. Morley." If that good lady had enjoyed more than a mere surface acquaintance with Mr. Morley she would have laughed at the absurdity of a misconception as grotesque as that which would impute to Lord Wolseley indifference to military science or would declare that Mr. Spurgeon could not possibly be interested in a visit to Jerusalem. Mr. Morley has a great deal more of the poetic temperament than most of his contemporaries . . . while deep within him burns that central fire of passion, without which poetry is but as the tinkling cymbal. Few people know this, because Mr. Morley seldom lets himself go. He exercises a stern restraint upon himself which is so habitual that few but his intimates suspect how much "fire he has got in his belly" – to quote the familiar Carlylean phrase which used to be constantly in use at the *Pall Mall* when Mr. Morley was there, as the phrase for measuring the vital force which dwells in man.'

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[1] Mr. James Annand, editor of the *Newcastle Chronicle*, 1874–8, and afterwards of the *Shields Daily Gazette* and the *Newcastle Leader*, 1885–95. Of all the caligraphies which I have encountered in going through Stead's correspondence, Mr. Annand's (with the possible exception of Dean Stanley's) was the most troublesome to decipher. But it was a satisfaction in one particularly illegible letter to discover the authorship of this picturesque phrase.

After complaining that there was in Mr. Morley one real lack – that he had no amusements save music and books – Stead goes on to deal with the popular notion of him as a 'Red Republican,' a 'Jacobin':

'Never was there any man less of a Jacobin. . . . Mr. Morley once described himself in a speech at Clapton as "a cautious Whig by temperament, a Liberal by education and training, and a Radical by observation and experience." Temperament in the long run is stronger than anything else. What is bred in the bone comes out in politics as in other things, and Mr. Morley is pre-eminently the cautious man with strong conservative instincts. There is in him a deep-rooted reverence for the law, and even for tradition, that often must make him feel strangely out of place when sitting among some of his political associates. . . . No man is less of a Revolutionist than Mr. Morley. Of our great men he has far greater reverence for Burke than for Oliver Cromwell. Mr. Morley, with the deep, ingrained Conservatism of his nature, shudders at the thought of the stern soldier's peremptory order, "Take away that bauble," while his whole soul goes out in sympathy to Edmund Burke, the philosophical statesman, who more than any other realized Mr. Morley's ideal.'

The next passage has a special interest because of Stead's own flamboyant methods and perfervid zeal in reform:

'Mr. Morley does not like new-fangled notions. He shrinks from leaps in the dark, and venturesome experiments. Although he has occasional purple patches in his oratory and in his writings, he is repelled rather than attracted by the men whose heroic or adventurous career makes them stand out from the canvas like scarlet figures in a great painting. "I like the drab men best," he used to say. And the vein of serious, sober sedateness is very characteristic of his politics. If he advocates a revolutionary change it is for the sake of a Conservative end. He has a morbid horror of violence in any shape or form. It is a kind of physical repulsion which is excited equally by the excesses of revolutionary passion or the more cruel, because more systematic, violence of constituted authority. He is a great legalist, although far from being a hide-bound pedant. He will, if it be clearly, conclusively proved to be necessary, trample even on your parchments and muniments, but he will do so with a sigh and an inner conviction in the soul of him, that he is offending against the Law of Things.'

Harmonious co-operation between the man thus described and the W. T. Stead we know would seem almost impossible. The following passage, however, helps us to understand their relationship:

'There is a curious contrast between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Morley. Mr. Gladstone is always demonstrating his own consistency, and no one believes that he has always been consistent. Mr. Morley never says a word about consistency, does not, indeed, regard consistency as a virtue, and yet every one regards him as a model of consistency. As a matter of fact, Mr. Morley is not in the least consistent, and there has always been about him a certain noble shamelessness in avowing that he has changed his mind. What, indeed, does a change of opinion show except a readiness to admit that you may be wiser or better informed to-day than you were yesterday? Mr. Morley has executed changes of front of the most complete kind on questions which have their roots deep down in the very foundations of society. When he asked me to come up to London and work for him, I diligently read up the old *Fortnightlies* to see whether or not we were likely to agree. I told him I thought we agreed very well, with one important exception. "You mean religion," said he. "No," I replied; "I think we should agree there, whenever the subject became practical.[1] The subject on which we disagree is the Contagious Diseases Acts. You have written strongly in their favour; I am dead against them." "Oh," said Mr. Morley, "but I am also against them. That article you refer to was written many years ago. It was a mistake. I have changed my mind, and I am entirely with you on that point."

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[1] As things turned out, there was only one serious dispute regarding religion between the two. This was in connection with an atheistic article by Mr. (afterwards Sir James) Fitzjames Stephen, which Morley insisted should 'go in,' despite Stead's protests. Stead gave in his resignation and Morley yielded. 'Ah, that was worth living for!' Canon Liddon exclaimed to Stead on hearing what happened.

That was the first time I came across that simple, good-humoured candour that owned up to a mistake and announced a change of convictions with a frank humility that disarms cynical reflections. He never was ashamed to admit that he had changed his mind or had abandoned an untenable position.'

Proceeding to analyze the difference between the two statesmen in regard to this matter of consistency, Stead declares that Mr. Morley's lack of Mr. Gladstone's 'nimbleness of mind' was a drawback to him as an editor of a daily paper. He goes on to show that Mr. Morley was not a born journalist:

'He was deficient in the range of his sympathies. No power on earth could command Mr. Morley's interest in three-fourths of the matter that fills the papers. He is in intellect an aristocrat. He looked down with infinite contempt upon most of the trifles that interest the "British tomfool," as the general reader used sometimes to be playfully designated when considerations of management clashed with editorial aspirations. He had no eye for news, and he was totally devoid of the journalistic instinct. To him a newspaper was simply a pulpit from which he could preach, and, as a preacher, like all of us who are absorbed in our own ideas, he was apt at times to be a little monotonous.'

These are long citations, but, as it seems to me, they are strictly relevant, even essential, to any record of Stead's career. He has been drawing his own portrait for us as well as Morley's.

IV

MORLEY'S INNINGS

One regrets that Lord Morley should have refrained always from sketching Stead. Apart from the few lines in the *Recollections*, there would seem to be nowhere any printed record of the editor's view of his assistant except in Wilfrid Blunt's Diary for 1884, incorporated in his *Gordon at Khartoum*, in the entry for June 5 of that year. Mr. Blunt was never one of Stead's admirers, and Morley himself at this moment – some nine months after he had quitted the paper – was out of humour with his editorial successor. But the entry is worth transcribing almost in full. Morley, it should be noted, was Mr. Blunt's guest in the country when the conversation took place:

'Morley told me this morning a great deal about Stead . . . a man of entire belief in himself, a good deal of imagination and not a little superstition; a believer in dreams and inspirations. On one occasion in the autumn of 1882 he sent Morley a message, saying he wanted to see him on important business. This was to tell him that, having gone for a cruise round the Isle of Wight, he had a sudden inspiration just off the Needles to the effect that Morley would be in Parliament and have left the *Pall Mall* by the following March. When it happened, Stead had taken it as a matter of course; he had boundless ambition, and has it as a maxim that a newspaper editor is stronger than any Minister. Morley looks upon him as a political quack. He, Morley, eschews the *Pall Mall* now and all its works.'[1]

It is quite an interesting passage, though a misleading one, for the relations between Morley and Stead continued to be, as they had always been, very much closer and more friendly than Mr. Blunt would like us to believe. A 'union of classical severity with the rude vigour of a Goth' – as *The Times* very happily characterized the Morley-Stead partnership – would seem to be a sheer impossibility, but it really did exist and thrive. Sir E. T. Cook, who was to join the *Pall Mall Gazette* just before the partnership dissolved, records for us a remark of Morley's in 1892 which has its significance in this connection: 'As I said to my wife, "It is no joke in Ireland with Redmondites, Ulster, and all the rest of it. But as I kept Stead in order for three years, I don't see why I shouldn't govern Ireland." '[2]

There is no doubt whatever about Morley's having kept the upper hand, and even in a somewhat despotic manner, throughout his editorship. 'Classical severity, was the dominant note,' as Mr. Saxon Mills says, and 'the Gothic influence was kept under effectual control.'[3] It is not easy, indeed, to discern any traces of Stead's personality in the *P.M.G.* just at first. A gradual lightening and brightening of the news columns becomes perceptible, but the journal, viewed as a whole, remained above all things dignified and sedate. It continued at the same time to be extraordinarily readable. We have no English newspaper to-day so well qualified to satisfy cultured and fastidious minds. One feels that a period of six months' enforced seclusion from the world of men might be very pleasantly and profitably spent if one had Morley's *Pall Mall Gazette* for company, with its truly admirable leading articles – ten or fifteen minutes of calm, sagacious discussion, sometimes epigrammatic, sometimes quietly humorous, sometimes rousingly trenchant, on the chief topic of the day; its ingeniously phrased 'Occasional Notes'; its letters, often brilliant, from Paris and other capitals of Europe; its philosophical inquiries into social, political, and religious problems in all parts of the world; its thoughtful and clever book-reviews; and its very thorough and comprehensive summary of contemporary opinion. The editor's own preoccupations and predilections are obvious now and again. His friend, Matthew Arnold, airily scornful, has somewhere, in an address, referred to Blackburn as a 'hell-hole'; the future Lord Morley of Blackburn does not suffer his birthplace to go undefended. Full attention is devoted to certain grievances of Lincoln College, Oxford, his *Alma Mater*. Mr. Frederic Harrison is given a very free hand in his vigorous polemics against leading champions of orthodox Christianity. The development of 'Science in Politics' is traced from the days of Socrates down to those of Comte. John Stuart Mill is often cited. Ireland and India are continually to the front.

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[1] Lord Morley, who was kind enough to read this portion of my book (i.e. from p. 66 to the middle of p. 89) wrote an emphatic *NO* in red ink against these two concluding lines.

[2] *Life of Sir Edward Cook*, by J. Saxon Mills.

[3] The same.

In regard to Ireland and India we may be sure that the assistant editor was already very active, no less than in regard to the difficulties in the Near East, but his actual handiwork one would find it hard to identify; and not much light is thrown on the subject by the brief and hasty notes to him from Morley at this period which have been preserved. The question of the desirability of coercing the Porte had begun to be urgent in July 1880, and at Morley's request Stead, while yet at Darlington, had written an article on the subject for the *Fortnightly Review*, a very characteristic article it was, concluding with these words:[1]

> '*The earnest advocates of peace principles, so far from shrinking from coercion by united Europe, should rather hail it as a widening of the area of political action, an extension of the boundaries of the law and a mighty stride towards the realization of their sublime ideal – the federation of the world.*'

By the end of September this Near Eastern difficulty had become the burning topic of the moment, and we find Morley wishing that Stead 'were here to write about it,' and confessing that he himself is 'only half-hearted about the business.' But Stead's coming has been delayed through the illness of one of his children, and Morley has to pursue the matter himself. He does so most successfully, for a week later the *P.M.G.* brings off what any less exalted editor would claim gleefully as a 'scoop'; in its leading article for Wednesday, October 6, it is able to shadow forth very discreetly, but quite unmistakably, the Government's hitherto unrevealed decision to threaten the Sultan with the seizure of Smyrna by England on behalf of the Powers, thereby depriving him of the bulk of his revenue. How important was the piece of news thus conveyed may be gauged by the Foreign Secretary's feelings on reading the paper. 'Gladstone has let the *Pall Mall* let our Smyrna cat out of the bag,' Lord Granville wrote to his wife next day, 'I am very angry.'[1]

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[1] So characteristic of Stead and so interesting to note now, that I have been tempted to italicize them.

Ireland was Morley's great subject – the one subject that he 'really cared about,' so Stead wrote later in a *Pall Mall Gazette* 'Extra,' entitled *John Morley: The Irish Record of the New Chief Secretary*. In this pamphlet (issued in February 1886) Stead furnishes us with an admirable summary of his former chief's pronouncements on Ireland during the preceding years and, in particular, during those years of his editorship. Egypt, Afghanistan, the Eastern question, and the Transvaal from time to time claimed Morley's attention, but he wrote upon these matters 'on compulsion only,' Stead tells us; 'upon Ireland he wrote by choice; and to some it seemed as if he would never cease writing about Ireland. Day after day he kept dinning his message into the ear of a public at first indifferent, then angry, and afterwards despairing, but ever compelled to listen to his provokingly lucid and vigorous expositions of the Gospel of conciliation and sympathy.' When, in the autumn of 1880, all the other English papers howled at Parnell's proposals in regard to the land question, the editor of the *Pall Mall* urged the wisdom of meeting the Irish leader half-way; 'We are not bound to follow Mr. Parnell's counsels,' he wrote. 'At the same time it is well to prepare ourselves to devise some plan which the Irish are likely to accept and no tone which they are certain to refuse.'

I shall not attempt to re-tell here the oft-told story of that first phase of Parnell's struggle for Home Rule, but it may be useful to jog one's memory, as it were, by just turning over some of the leaves of the once well-known pamphlet. It reminds one, for instance, how the first cry for coercion was raised in October 1880, how disorder in Ireland grew worse, how W. E. Forster, the Irish Secretary, began to show signs of yielding to the pressure brought to bear upon him by the Coercionists in the Cabinet, and how, at last, early in 1881, these latter triumphed. The Coercion Bill was followed by the Land Bill, and then Parnell, suspected by Gladstone of hindering the operation of this new remedial measure, was thrown into gaol. Not until February 1882 did Morley enter seriously on the vehement struggle against Forster which was to end three months later in the latter's resignation. Then, on May 5, came the assassination of the new Irish Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, together with that of Mr. Burke, in Phœnix Park, at the hands of the Invincibles, followed by the Crimes Bill, introduced by Sir William Harcourt and passed in the face of incessant and very powerful opposition in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, almost its sole English critic of any weight and influence. In the autumn of 1882 Morley went over to Ireland to see things for himself and he embodied his impressions in a long article in the *Nineteenth Century* entitled 'Irish Revolution and English Liberalism.' In this again we come upon many sentences that have an added significance to-day. So long as some one is locked up in Ireland, Morley says, the official mind is satisfied – the great thing in English eyes is 'to show force.' The peasant improves upon the lesson and the result is the Moonlighters; then the outrages of the Moonlighter excite 'the honourable English abhorrence of systematic crime,' and outrages in Ireland prevent the English from seeing any good in a movement which was tainted and sullied with them. 'This is the cursed spite of the relations between the two countries.'

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[1] *Life of Lord Granville*, by Lord E. Fitzmaurice.

In February 1883, Morley was chosen as the Liberal candidate for Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the place of Mr. Ashton Dilke, who had been obliged by failing health to resign. He was elected and soon found that he could not combine the two rôles of editor and Member of Parliament. In August 1883 he left the newspaper.

It would be interesting to glance further at the course of the *P.M.G.* during the Morley-Stead period of its career, but considerations of space forbid.[1]

[1] Mr. R. H. Gretton, in a work which is a marvel of deft compression, *A Modern History of the English People*, has had to devote more than a hundred

In any case, this was Morley's innings, rather than Stead's; Stead's real innings in Northumberland Street began only when Morley's finished. Now, he was merely keeping up his wicket and getting his eye in, while Morley made the runs. Occasionally (if I may carry the cricketing metaphor just one point further) Stead stepped out and hit a 'boundary' – a very splendid one, for instance, in his *Fifty Years of the House of Lords*, a pamphlet (reprinted from the *P.M.G.*) which evoked the enthusiasm of Bright and Gladstone and on which we shall find Morley's own encomium presently. But he did not become famous while under Morley. Outside Fleet Street and the Lobby of the House of Commons and certain narrow circles of very earnest men and women engaged in work of social reform, he remained quite unknown. He was merely serving his apprenticeship as a London publicist. It will be time enough to study his attitude towards Ireland and Labour, Afghanistan and South Africa and Egypt, when he himself shall have come to occupy the editorial chair.

V

SOME OF MORLEY'S LETTERS TO STEAD

Meanwhile, with the help of some old letters – a few that survive out of the countless multitude which Stead received or wrote – we shall do well to find out what we can of the relations between the two men. Lord Morley, himself, is not a hoarder of personal correspondence, and he has kept none at all of the many notes which his assistant editor must have addressed to him: the biographer of Gladstone, after wrestling with the most formidable mass of collected letters known to the world, is happy in the consciousness that he has reduced his own stock to a minimum.[1] Stead, however, preserved nearly all his chief's communications – some ninety in all from this period. Though concerned for the most part with matters now forgotten or with the mere routine of the newspaper office, some of them are full of interest.

pages to the happenings of 1880–3; and in practically all these happenings the *Pall Mall* took a hand. It would be tiresome and useless to give a mere catalogue of events, beginning with the famine in Ireland and the labour disputes in England and South Wales, the war in Afghanistan, and the heritage of trouble in South Africa, so prominent among Mr. Gladstone's anxieties when he formed the second Ministry of the General Election of 1880; and ending with the troubles in Egypt in 1883.

[1] This chapter was written in Lord Morley's lifetime, and as these pages were read by him, I have not altered the present tense to the past.

They begin uniformly 'Dear Mr. Stead,'[1] but their endings vary. As a rule we find 'Yours ever,' or 'Yours ever cordially'; less often 'Yours very truly' or – when scribbled in great haste – 'Y.V.T.'; on exceptional occasions, it is 'Yours gratefully' or 'Yours affectionately.' Now and again, these letters, as we shall see, are outspoken in disagreement or in remonstrance, but, without a single exception, they are the letters of a good friend. Throughout the three years with which we are concerned in this chapter, there is no sign of anything in the least like a falling out between chief and subordinate. In their hottest and most strenuous conflicts it is always a case – as Carlyle would have said – of 'except in opinion, not disagreeing.'

The first interesting item one meets is a comment which Morley has heard from Dr. Dale of Birmingham. 'Dale told me last night,' he writes on April 20, 1881, 'that people complain of the *P.M.G.* being too incessantly strenuous – earnest, etc. People want more relief.' The warning seems to have had its effect, for on April 22 he can say: 'The *P.M.G.* looked very lively this morning, I thought.' Some months later, on August 6, being then on his holiday, Morley re-echoes Dale's criticism himself. He finds the paper 'infinitely too stiff and crammed with politics . . . exactly twice too much politics.' During that summer Morley seems to have been often absent from the office and in bad health. He complains frequently of being 'jaded' and 'unable to screw a leader' out of himself. He is keenly appreciative of Stead's amazing energy. Sometimes he is alarmed by it. In a letter dated July 27, we read: 'You ought not to write anything to-night – nor on other nights. The whole policy is a mistake and will break you down. You ought to have a list of men to help and distribute topics. I must make a bargain with you on this point or else I shall have to come back from Scotland in a hurry.'

On August 1, 1881, we have some noteworthy remarks on Stead's share in the campaign against the House of Lords: 'Remember,' Morley writes, 'the H. of L. is an institution of the country. If we go in for abolishing it – all right; but it is a large order. And in any case it must be seriously and elaborately argued in a businesslike way. *Abuse* is the wrong tack and so are sneers of an abusive kind. Gentle irony is the best weapon in our present phase – the best, *except* your own admirable record of their follies.' (The allusion is, of course, to *Fifty Years of the House of Lords.*) 'You often, I note, use the word the "people." It is rather vague and sentimental to my thinking,' Morley continues, and he goes on to question the expediency of a phrase employed scornfully by Stead in attacking the Tories: ' "Obedient majority" – Why not? Isn't Gladstone's majority obedient?' The little lecture proceeds: 'Treat the H. of L. as seriously and as RESPECTFULLY (in form and language) as the H. of C. or the Queen. It will make opposition to them more effective. No *impertinences* towards them, I beg of you. I don't see the fun of talking about "their lordships." '[1]

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[1] To the very end, it was always 'Dear Mr. Stead' and 'Dear Mr. Morley,' 'Dear Lord Morley,' between them. It is noteworthy that Stead did not drop the 'Mr.' even with Cecil Rhodes with whom he grew so intimate.

The letter ends in another vein. After an admonition to Stead to keep 'a sharp eye on T. P.'s Parlt.' (Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., was then describing the debates for the paper very admirably but with, of course, an inevitable bias), Morley concludes: 'Now that my time has come for going away, the gas seems suddenly to have gone out of the balloon and I'm all in the dumps. I only fear that you will overdo yourself. Pray do not. The world will want you more ten years hence than now. It is a sin as well as folly to kill yourself now.'

'No *fanaticism* about vivisection, *s'il vous plait*,' is a significant caution given in a letter dated August 7, which also contains a characteristic defence of the upholders of Free Thought. Stead has been indulging in some reflections which Morley considers unjustified: 'That was a matter of politics, pure and simple,' he writes, 'and we Free-thinkers differ as much in politics as other folk. In the matter of *inferior races* we have never differed – and that is the point. Free-thinkers have been unanimous . . . Christians have not. Argal, in so far, the doctrine of Free-thinkers seems to be relied on.'

In a letter devoted chiefly to warm praise for a leading article of Stead's a few days later, there comes incidentally a quaint disclaimer of 'two propositions' which Stead, he complains, has imputed to him:

1. That W. T. S. is a fly-by-the-sky.
2. That J. C. is a great man, if by great man you mean a Burke or Chatham – 'J. C.' being, of course, Chamberlain.

And we again find symptoms of anxiety as to the Parliamentary sketches of the hard-hitting 'T. P.' Morley would like to see them before they are used: 'He may take it out of some particular friend of mine!'

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[1] It appears from a later note that it was E. V. Dicey who was given to talking of 'their lordships' and also of 'the Gilded Chamber,' another jibe which Morley condemns.

Morley's strong opposition to Coercion in Ireland and to W. E. Forster, then Irish Secretary, is evidenced in the letter that follows. Usually Stead has to be restrained. In this case he has written, or at least allowed in, a leader which Morley finds 'washy' in its weakness. 'Please not to allow *any* halting in this matter,' he is admonished peremptorily. Presently, we have a note in which we find the name Milner mentioned for the first time – Mr. Alfred Milner (the Lord Milner of to-day) had recently joined the staff. 'Milner's articles have been capital . . . the paper looks healthy all round.'

On September 3 Morley, still holiday-making in Scotland, writes to condemn the 'Literary Notes' in the paper – he does not like them *at all*. He does not know from whose pen they come, but he asks Stead very firmly 'to let them drop.' On the day following he has some instructions to give in connection with the contributions of Richard Jefferies, whose essays on country life were then so popular. 'If you have any occasion to write to him,' Morley warns Stead, 'remember that he is very touchy and needs gentle handling.'

Stead, this year, wrote on several occasions the chronicle of the month's events which Morley undertook as a rule for the *Fortnightly Review*, still under his own editorship. We come upon many allusions to the *Chronique*, as Morley called it, expressions of warm approval mostly; and we hear of the cheques in payment for Stead's articles being enclosed. Both in the *Fortnightly* and the *Pall Mall* Stead's pro-Russianism is in Morley's eyes a danger. There is frequent question of it. 'It is not important at the moment, but I think it will be best to leave Russia alone until my return,' he writes on September 24. 'When I resume my ferule or sceptre, let Czars tremble!'

And it is to be noted that John Morley, the Free-thinker, concludes his epistle by saying: 'I shall be in town by Friday or Saturday, D.V.'

Ireland, of course, is the subject of all others on which the editor likes to see his own views uniformly expounded and defended. On October 4 he writes from Birmingham, where he is visiting Chamberlain: 'I want you to leave *Ireland as much alone as you can*. We shall have to make a fresh start, I fancy.'

And, on October 6, returned to his home at Putney, he continues: 'I rather want you to let *Ireland* drop out *altogether* from leaders and notes. I cannot explain by letter, but I think it will be as well. Of course, if the island disappears some morning you must have a leader on the catastrophe. Short of that, I wish it to be left alone. . . . *The news from Ireland is bad*' – deeply underlined, these six words.

On October 19 Morley pens another grave admonition: 'I am dead against a scream,' he declares. 'It is easy to denounce. Let us gravely and responsibly face the difficulties. The rebuke is due to the British public – not to Gladstone and Co. This is for the moment a question of administration. *They* must take the responsibility. *We* look on with suspicion and doubt.'

We come now to the date of Stead's first holiday. Morley had been away for a good many weeks finishing his book on Cobden, writing hard against time, and Stead's more-than-willingness to run the *P.M.G.* single-handed in the meantime has been an immense boon to him. 'Your kindness and consideration,' he writes, 'touch me to the core. It is unlike the ways of the world and I feel as if it were something more than I deserved.'

Stead is off to Paris – his first trip abroad – and Morley provides him with letters of introduction to friends at Fontainebleau, to Louis Blanc, and to Mrs. Emily Crawford, the clever, plucky, jolly Irishwoman who was already famous as Paris Correspondent of the *Daily News* and of *Truth*, and who occasionally contributed also to the *P.M.G.* We shall hear of her again.

During November and December, while Stead was away, and after his return, Morley's letters were less frequent, and they contain little to our purpose. The only really interesting one among them is the last, and this comes very aptly as a climax at once to their correspondence and to their collaboration throughout the year. It is dated December 26, 1881.

'Your letter has just reached me and has given me as much pleasure as anything that has happened to me for a long time. As for "patience," I rather think that when Perfect Wisdom comes to the account between us, it is I who shall be left heavily the debtor. But we won't bandy compliments. All your kind feeling is most fully and cordially reciprocated by me. You need no words to say how I value, as being indeed beyond valuation, the zeal and powerful ability which you have added to our common stock of working force. I don't know whether I hope that we shall work together for many years to come –

but I am perfectly sure that our personal friendship and affection will remain unimpaired.'

The reader will agree, I am sure, that one's knowledge of Stead has been sensibly increased by a glance through these pleasant letters. Those which follow in 1882 and 1883 are very similar in both matter and manner. For the most part they belong to Lord Morley's own biography rather than to Stead's. It will suffice to glance at the last of all, again a Boxing Day epistle and again a happy ending. Stead, he protests, has been extolling him 'beyond his deserts.' He feels that he 'has been but an unprofitable servant,' and can only find consolation in the thought that some useful things have been done in the world 'by men of the same lowly frame of mind.' 'But though a modest owl myself,' he continues playfully, 'I have a great admiration for eagles, in the evening press and elsewhere.' And he concludes thus: 'Whether circumstances cause us to drift apart or not – I hope they may not – I shall always cherish an affectionate memory of many traits in our intercourse and of many acts of kindness and consideration from you.'

Here, without further comment, I may give Stead's own extremely interesting and characteristic reflections on his three years with Morley as recorded in a manuscript notebook :

'Augt. 25, 1883. Mr. Morley wrote his last leader to-day at the office. He called it the "Three Years of Liberal Administration." I wanted him to call it "After Three Years." He demurred; but afterwards consented. At the eleventh hour, however, he altered the heading in proof, fearing lest "After three Years" might be taken to mean his own three years' work at the *P.M.G.* The leader concluded with the following reference to the Irish Question: "Given popular or parliamentary government, in the first place, and government by rival parties on the other, how is a disaffected province to be managed? That is the question that may yet, and even soon, be fatal to Liberal unity and to many a political reputation." He asked me to look carefully at the last words. I took the proof into him and said, "I do not like the ending; it is quite true, but people are apt to attach a somewhat superstitious importance to last words, and some day when you have quarrelled with the Irish, as quarrel with them you will, these words will rise up before you as prophetic of your doom."

'He laughed and said: "I don't know that I shall quarrel with the Irish. My reputation is much more likely to be lost by going with them." "Oh, no," I said, "you will quarrel with them, and I foresee an eloquent leader in the *Freeman's Journal* holding up to everlasting infamy the recreant politician from whom much had been expected, but who had basely trampled upon Ireland by refusing to do some mad thing or other."

'He looked bothered a bit, and then said: "The crash will not come for twenty or thirty years, and if you imagine that anyone will take the trouble to recall anything written in a newspaper after that length of time you must have more faith in journalism than I – as indeed you have," he added. "But," I said, "you say in your leader that this may happen 'very soon.'"

' "Oh, but," said he, laughing, "that must be construed in a geological sense. Twenty or thirty years are nothing in the history of a nation, for instance."

' "Add a footnote, then," said I, "saying 'Construe "very soon" in a geological sense' . . . but I don't like it, and it gives me an uneasy feeling about yourself."

'An hour afterwards he bade us all "good-bye." "No one can tell," he said, "how glad I am to be out of all this, and back to my old life again, which, perhaps, it was a mistake that I ever quitted."

' "Not," I interposed, "unless your new departure is a still greater mistake."

' "Do not speak of it," he said, "it is an unpleasant subject."

' "Good-bye," and may the *Grand Etre* to whom we all pray give you his blessing. I wish you well. You will be successful, I doubt not."

'After a few more words he said "Good-bye, and God bless you" – a phrase which, oddly enough, he always uses when he is deeply touched. He went out to return no more as Editor – or Contributor possibly – to the *Pall Mall Gazette.*

'In leaving Morley, with whom for nearly three years I have worked in the closest intimacy and almost brotherly confidence, I feel somewhat sad. I think that on the whole I have been drawn nearer to him than to any other man I ever met. I think I have had more real manly communion of heart and soul with him than with any other man. I was singularly drawn to him from the first, and cling to him now more closely than I had imagined I did before we came to part.

It is no small thing for three years to act in closest concert in affairs of State, knowing that the decision you jointly make may wreck Cabinets or let loose a tide of war upon helpless populations.

'Morley and I approached almost everything from a different standpoint. We disagreed, as I often said, on everything from the existence of a God to the make-up of a newspaper. Yet during all these three years we only came to one sharp collision. I refer to a time when he wished to make the *P.M.G.* a declared advocate of Atheism.

'Yet, strange though it may sound to some ears, I am by no means sure that he, the Atheist, is not much more deeply religious than I, the Christian. He sometimes said – and with perfect truth – that he ought to have been a religious teacher; and that it was a mistake for him to have ever had anything to do with politics. There is a depth of reverence about him and a fine sympathy of soul to which I can lay no claim. Would it were otherwise! I, on the other hand, am so impatient, so vehement, so anxious ever to jog the elbow of the Almighty, that I fancy Mr. Morley's mood of mind harmonizes much more with the truly religious ideal, which perhaps is more devotional, more meditative, more resigned than mine could ever be. My life is but a fever which I fear sometimes will soon burn itself out and die. Well, be it so, if it must be! I cannot be moderate, the throbbing of my heart will never cool, the fever burns within my brain. I feel very depressed to-night as if the life would be too much for me – the heavy upward strain of the weight which hangs round my head; there is so much to do, and so little time to do it in, and so little strength to do it with.

'And yet why should I fear? I have been helped hitherto and shall be helped. Therein have I a great advantage over Mr. Morley. Rightly or wrongly, I have never doubted that I and my life's work, such as it is, are not my own, nor do I wish them to be. As I told Morley once, when he was in considerable doubt about his entering Parliament, that in his place I should have had no doubt; that the sign of the Divine leading was always to me so plain, so clearly marked, that it was impossible for me to mistake. If you are willing to be anything or nothing, in so far you are what God has need of: if you leave everything that is beyond your reach in His disposal, you can act without hesitation, without doubt, knowing that the unknown, the mysterious, all-encompassing Infinite, will work with you and the sum of your efforts will be for good and not for evil. Not personally, perhaps, for, as I often say, all my ideals ended in martyrdom – but for the cause which will gain, not lose.

'He sighed, and said, "Yes, that, no doubt, is a far higher ideal if you can hold to it" – which, alas, he did not feel he could.

'Hence, between me and Mr. Morley there was this terse difference, that he distrusted and feared – not in a cowardly way – but still had no confidence in the Unknown, Ultimate, Invisible; whereas I, weak, foolish, and passionate, as I often have been, have never, never, lost even for one hour, the conviction that this Unknown, Invisible, is a force, a power, a person working with me, using me, directing me, employing even my mistakes and sins for the working out of an infinite, high and noble purpose, of which I can as yet but dimly see the outline through the impalpable haze of the infinite future.

'Morley, too, is older than I by ten years. Perhaps if I live till I am ten years older the fierce impulses which govern me, and sometimes drive me mad, will have moderated their force: the sight of cruelty and selfishness and of brutality may no longer chill me until I shiver and my head grows faint: the eager rush of ideas, the rapture of conscious strength, the glow of victory over some opponent may never cause the blood to course through my veins as it does to-day. I may never feel compelled to do what other people think quixotic absurdities. I may, in short, cool down, and become crusted over: but I don't know. When I die perhaps! No, not even then. For if there be any truth in the great dream of heaven which has fired the imagination and sustained the hopes of countless generations of mankind of all religions, then the next world will be to me a life of intenser vitality, not of rest. To live more slowly than I do now, that would be no heaven for me.

'There is one strange incongruity in Mr. Morley's character which often struck me much. With him, his idealism, and all the element which, as he said, fitted him for the post of a religious teacher, there was mingled a strange seam of what an enemy might call self-seeking and personal ambition. He never lost himself in his cause, nor was he ever willing to be trodden under-foot if thereby the cause might prosper. I remember talking to him at the beginning of the Irish business when I was very much struck by the consciousness which he always had of himself and of his record. This rather grew upon him than otherwise. And when he got into Parliament it was more so than ever. How it will fare with him in the future I do not know.

His path and mine lie far apart. I fancy sometimes that before twelve months are over, he will look back with regret to the share he had in bringing me up to the *P.M.G.* office. If my health is spared I shall be a great power in the land and my influence will often be used in favour of causes which Mr. Morley regards with little love. Whether it may ever be my lot to cross his path and stand, as it were, between him and the attainment of the object of his ambitions, I know not.'

VI

THE *P.M.G. PERSONNEL*, 1880–83

Stead's three principal colleagues in 1882 and 1883 were Alfred Milner, E. T. Cook, and Charles Morley. Charles Morley, the editor's nephew, had drifted into journalism in his uncle's wake, after a residence of several years in Australia. He helped to sub-edit the *Pall Mall Gazette* and presently became editor of the weekly issue known as the *Pall Mall Budget*. In a very sympathetic reminiscence contributed in 1916 to a selection from Charles Morley's writings entitled *Travels in London*, edited by Mr. J. P. Collins,[1] Sir E. T. Cook writes as follows:

' "The Old *Pall Mall*," as many of us in successive phases have called it, means a different thing to different people. Just as every member of a school or college thinks that the old place was never quite the same, or so excellent, as when he belonged to it, so in the case of a favourite paper the palmy days are held to have been those in which ourselves had most to do with it. Charles Morley had a longer connection with the *Pall Mall* than any living man – with the exception possibly of his old friend Henry Leslie; he had served *Gazette* or *Budget* or *Magazine* under I know not how many dispensations; and as he was the soul of loyalty he would perhaps have been hard put to it to say which were *the* days of "the Old *Pall Mall*" to him. He had a natural affinity in some respects to the journalism of Mr. Stead; but I suspect that if he had been driven to stand and deliver, he would have said that the great days of the paper were those in which it was edited by John Morley. A profound admiration, not unmixed with a certain pious awe, for the character, the views, the achievements of his illustrious uncle was an engaging feature in the character of Charles Morley. I have never forgotten his version of the instructions he received as his uncle's secretary for answering a contributor who was teasing to know why some article had not appeared on a particular day or month. "Tell him, politely," said the editor, "that the world is not waiting for his article, that it would continue to move if the article never appeared at all, and that the end of the world would not come even if the paper itself were never to appear again." Charles had forgotten, or at any rate did not say, how much of this wholesome wisdom survived in the answer actually sent. During the editorship of Lord Morley the *Pall Mall* had many distinguished contributors and Charles learnt much that was valuable to him in later days – such as who was the leading authority on this subject or on that, and what in each case was the likeliest avenue of approach. It must have been a varied as well as a valuable apprenticeship to have watched the collaboration and heard the discussions between two journalists so different in temperament and equipment as Lord Morley and his assistant-editor, Mr. Stead. Not that there was ever any doubt, I imagine, which was master in the house. In later days, when Mr. Stead was in full and uncontrolled career, Charles used sometimes to recall how the lion was once tame.'

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[1] Published by Smith, Elder & Co. Mr. Collins, himself a *P.M.G.* man in later years and for a time Mr. Charles Morley's colleague in editing the *Pall Mall Magazine*, contributes an excellent memoir by way of preface.

We shall see more of Charles Morley in subsequent chapters. While his uncle ruled, he remained a quite subsidiary figure in the background. At Milner, also, it will be sufficient here to take a glimpse, for although his great talents and force of character brought him very quickly to the front, his real place in *Pall Mall* history is by Stead's side a little later, in the launching of the New Journalism.

Stead seems to have preserved nearly all Milner's letters to him from start to finish. In the first of the long series – written from 54 Claverton Street, S.W., and dated March 23, 1882 – we find them already on the best of terms. Milner is a frequent visitor, apparently, at Stead's house in Wimbledon, and he is anxious to bring there, one Sunday soon, one or other of his two great friends, Claude Montefiore or Arnold Toynbee, at that time Political Economy Lecturer at Oxford. 'He gave that address on Socialism to workmen at Newcastle,' he reminds Stead. 'I wonder if you remember? You sent me a report of it.' It is not until the following month, however, that Milner actually joins the editorial staff of the paper. 'Thank you very much for your letter,' he writes to Stead on April 2. 'The arrangement you propose will suit me perfectly. As you know, I don't want to give myself up to journalism, but it would be rather helpful to me to give some time to it and I would rather do it regularly than spasmodically. I will regard attendance at nine a.m. as imperative and get up my news beforehand. What papers do you advise me to take in besides *The Times*? I thought the *Standard*, *Morning Post*, and *Daily News*. The foreign papers, you know, I see at my club.'

A lively note dated April 11, 1882, reveals the fact that Stead this year spent his summer holiday in Germany: 'I am very glad to hear that you are looking very well,' writes Milner to him, 'and like the Vaterland and its inhabitants. I wish I could have heard you telling ghost-stories to a posse of incredulous Teutons!'

A month later, Stead being now back at his work, Milner, who in his turn is holiday-making, sends from Stuttgart an interesting letter which seems to show us that the *Pall Mall's* Egyptian attitude at this time was largely Stead's own : 'Let me congratulate you,' he writes, 'on the grand success of your Egyptian policy. How lucky for the *Pall Mall* now that it took the right view, and what a power its brave and sensible course has given it of influencing the ultimate settlement in the right direction!'

We need not concern ourselves, I think, with that Egyptian difficulty. What is interesting to note is Milner's attitude towards his chief.

In June 1883 Milner is again holiday-making, this time up the Thames to Great Marlow, and anxious to persuade Stead to visit Oxford with him – a project often planned in later years but never achieved. Towards the end of July, both Morley and Stead being away, he is in charge of the paper for a while and is conducting it with Stead-like vigour, seemingly, for a provincial organ has been moved to indignation by something the *P.M.G.* has printed. 'Greatly delighted with the *Sunderland Echo*,' he exclaims, in acknowledgment of a marked copy which Stead has sent him. 'You always get most pitched into for things you have *not* done!'

It was in the following month that E. T. Cook, in response to an invitation sent by Milner on Stead's behalf, joined the staff in Northumberland Street, having been an outside contributor already for about two years. Cook, while at Oxford, where he had been President of the Union, and where he was regarded as a young Liberal politician of great promise, had conceived a great admiration for Morley's *Pall Mall* articles, more especially those bearing on Bradlaugh's great struggle with Parliament – a matter in which Stead also was deeply interested and in which he took a hand later. Morley liked Cook's first efforts and encouraged them, but there was no room for another worker inside the office until he himself decided to withdraw. How wonderfully well Cook was qualified for his post subsequent pages will tell. As quiet and retiring, one might almost say demure, as Stead was boisterous and excitable, he played his unobtrusive part to perfection, making it gradually more and more important by reason of the ingenuity and resourcefulness he brought to it. Here it is sufficient to have introduced him upon our stage.

Among the other members of the paper it will suffice to mention Mr. Horace Voules,[1] manager from 1880–3; Mr. H. Leslie, who succeeded him; Miss Hulda Friederichs, whose contributions – especially those dealing with topical interests to women – were to become a familiar feature; and Mr. E. H. Stout, at this time a junior reporter merely, but in later years to prove one of Stead's most valuable colleagues and allies. The following notes from Mr. Stout's own pen tell us something of Stead's mode of existence at this period when away from Northumberland Street:

'You have asked me if I have any recollection of Mr. Stead's social and family life in those early *P.M.G.* days. After the lapse of forty years I cannot remember much very definitely. But most certainly he spent more time with his family then than he did afterwards when manifold activities and interests kept him in town until late in the evening and frequently sent him touring the country and distant parts of the world. When he lived at Cambridge House, in Wimbledon Park, he spent a good deal of his time with his children, into whose studies and sports he entered with the enthusiasm of a boy. Even then he was erratic, for I remember how his eldest boy, Willie, used to drive him down to the station in the morning – they kept a pony called "Polly," the family pet in those days – and it was no unusual thing for Willie to return with a message to his mother to the effect that Father was bringing some people down to dinner in the evening. "Did he say who?" "No." "Did he say how many?" "No." "Or what time they were coming?" Again "No." Most certainly the editor's wife suffered many things in consequence, but she learned to expect them with complacency. Sunday was always religiously devoted to the family and to the church which they attended in Wimbledon.

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[1] Afterwards so well known as manager of *Truth*.

'Mr. Stead was never a "diner-out" in the sense that most newspaper editors are. Nor was he a club man: in all his life he never joined a club. A demon for work himself, and ready to work night and day if necessary, he generally kept his secretaries pretty busy, working early and late, but if you ventured to hint that an engagement made or a holiday plan would be upset, the Chief would insist that you should go off duty and he would sit up to put the work through unaided. In many other little ways he was solicitous about members of the staff, even the humblest. I remember, for instance, that in 1882, when I was living in lodgings in the Borough, I was taken ill, and Mr. Stead left his office to come over and visit me, sitting by the bed and chatting pleasantly the while. Very few editors of London daily papers would have thought of doing this for a junior reporter. But Mr. Stead took a personal interest in all his associates, their homes, their friends and relatives, their loves and marriages.'

VII

A DINNER PARTY

This chapter would look incomplete without some further allusion to Mr. Yates Thompson. The very cordial terms in which Lord Morley wrote of him will be recalled by the reader. Stead's exciting and alarming experiments at a later period were, of course, calculated to try the patience of a newspaper proprietor who was not himself much in favour of such things, but during these early years Mr. Yates Thompson and his talented young wife appear to have shown a very friendly regard for the brilliant assistant editor. Mr. Stout has quite truly remarked that Stead was never a 'diner-out.' As it happens, however, one of the earliest experiences in his London career was a dinner-party given by the Yates Thompsons at their house in Bryanston Square. There is an unintentionally amusing reference to it in that extremely interesting book, *The Record of an Adventurous Life*, by the late Mr. H. M. Hyndman, the famous Cricketer-Socialist, of whom frivolous friends used to say that he only adopted Socialism out of spite against the world because he was not included in the Cambridge Eleven. The other guests – besides Hyndman and Stead – were John Morley, Robinson of the *Daily News*, and Andrew Lang. 'I have often thought of that dinner since,' Mr. Hyndman remarks. 'It was the first time Mr. Stead had appeared in London, where he was quite unknown.' And, having mentioned that Andrew Lang and Robinson and he himself, 'who all knew one another before,' walked away together, he proceeds: 'Curiously enough, different as we were in many respects, we had all three formed precisely the same judgment – not a very flattering one – of Mr. Stead. And what is still more remarkable, that judgment has been borne out completely by events.'

To those who chance to be familiar with all the four personalities in question – the 'wild barbarian from the north,' as Stead liked to call himself, and his three London censors – these lines are rather comical. 'Different' as these three London club-men undoubtedly were 'in many respects' – the elegant *difficile* Andrew Lang, at all times distant with strangers; the cautious and rather drab and rather dull little managing editor of the *Daily News;* and the self-assertive exuberant brilliant Socialist leader – it was absolutely inevitable that they should be of accord in their temperamental distaste for Stead.[1] How well one can picture that dinner party! Stead, of course, had done nearly all the talking. He could be a most excellent listener at need, but it came much more naturally to him to talk than to listen. Can one not see little Mr. Robinson (not yet Sir John) peering, in displeased astonishment, across the table at this obscure provincial laying down the law so presumptuously upon politics, morals, religion, journalism, every subject under the sun; while Andrew Lang turns his *pince-nez* in any other direction, disdainfully silent? Hyndman, of course, will have talked also and talked well, but in Stead, for once, he met a talker more brilliant, more exuberant, more self-assertive than himself – one for whom in debate he was no match whatever. And very evidently he did not relish the experience! . . . Mr. Morley, one feels sure, was content for the most part to look on and listen, appreciative of the comedy. Doubtless he retailed it afterwards – in a fashion very different from Mr. Hyndman's and from this effort of mine – to his friend George Meredith.

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[1] Lang and Robinson were bound to be 'incompatibles' with Stead at all times and in all circumstances. Hyndman's disapproval was due largely to opposition in regard to Russia.

CHAPTER 5

THE LAUNCHING OF 'THE NEW JOURNALISM':[1]

August 1883–*June* 1885

At a first glance, most visitors to the *Pall Mall Gazette* office in the earlier half of 1883 when Morley was still editor, would probably have formed the impression that there was infinitely more in common between Morley and Milner than between Milner and Stead. Morley and Milner were both of them typical Oxford men – of the serious, studious order of Oxonians. Both were reserved in manner and quiet of voice. A foreigner might have guessed them to be not merely kindred spirits but blood-relations, uncle and nephew perhaps, or first cousins. Whereas Stead, with his bushy, reddish beard and strange un-English eyes, his resonant utterance and boisterous laugh and restless manners, never sitting still for two minutes, looked like some one from a different world altogether – from Australia, possibly, or from the Transvaal. And yet the fact was that both Morley and Milner were much more strongly drawn towards Stead than towards each other. Stead liked both and admired both. In regard to many matters he was always to think and feel more with Morley than with Milner. If at this period Stead and Milner were able to throw in their lots together, whole-heartedly, joyously, unrestrainedly, it was in part, perhaps, because they were both by nature ardent social reformers, in part because of the influence upon them of a brilliant book – Seeley's *Expansion of England*, published in the July of that year.

Their Benthamite chief had little sympathy with Professor Seeley's ideas, and the much-talked-of volume had found in him one of its severest critics. Seeley had complained, for instance, that the greatest of all the difficulties in the way of Imperial Federation was the 'false preconception' which prevailed in England 'as to the problem being insoluble.' This proposition Morley scouted. 'On the contrary,' he declared, 'those who are incurably sceptical of Federation owe their scepticism not to a preconception at all but to a reasoned examination of actual schemes that have been proposed and of actual obstacles that irresistible circumstances interpose. It is when we consider the real life, the material pursuits, the solid interests, the separate frontiers and frontier-policies of the colonies, that we perceive how deeply the notions of Mr. Seeley are tainted with vagueness and dreaminess.'

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[1] The expression was first used by Matthew Arnold in 1887. See p. 237.

John Morley, the philosopher – the pessimist, as Stead was often disposed to call him – had, some nine years previously, in his famous essay *On Compromise*, given an indication of his attitude towards these matters regarding which Stead and his disciples were to grow so ardent. 'We have had imposed upon us,' he wrote then, 'by the unlucky prowess of our ancestors the task of ruling a vast number of millions of alien dependents. We undertake it with a disinterestedness, and execute it with a skill of administration, to which history supplies no parallel, and which, even if time should show that the conditions of the problem were insoluble, will still remain for ever admirable.'

Against this 'unlucky prowess' attitude, and all it involved, Morley's two subordinates had all along shown a tendency to rebel. Their own masters now, they inaugurated a new era in the *Pall Mall Gazette's* career.

The story of how, under Stead's control, and with Milner as his chief ally, the *Pall Mall Gazette* became at once the organ of 'Sane Imperialism ' and the liveliest, most vigorous, most venturesome of daily papers, may be told very largely in the words of the younger confederate. They were written for a 'Stead Memorial Number' of the *Review of Reviews*, issued in May 1912 :

'I do not think that within my recollection any newspaper in any country has ever exercised so much influence upon public affairs as the *Pall Mall* did during the first years of your father's editorship. This was, of course, entirely due to the force of his personality. My own position, I believe, was nominally that of assistant editor. I was certainly his closest associate, and the relations between us were those of the greatest intimacy and confidence. But, as far as actual work was concerned, my duties were almost a farce. No power on earth could have prevented your father from doing all the work himself – not only writing almost the whole of the literary matter but inspiring and controlling almost every part of it. But if my position inside the paper was as easy as it was always delightful, "external relations" were certainly not equally comfortable. To tell the truth, we were always in hot water with one or other large portion of the public. The tremendous energy – not to say recklessness – with which the *Pall Mall* of those days urged its invariably very pronounced opinions naturally excited no little animosity.

'Not that I think we either of us minded much. Certainly he did not mind a bit. We were both young. We were both – despite the greatest possible differences of temperament and training – cordially agreed on certain great lines of policy. We were both enthusiasts about the Race and the Empire. We were both shedding very fast the old tradition of the *laissez faire* school, and believed in the power and duty of the State to take vigorous action for the improvement of the conditions of life among the mass of the people. Indeed, if there were differences between us – and the differences were great – we were, in fact, constantly fighting – they were not differences of aim or of policy. It was on questions of tactics, method, manner of presentation, style, that we were continually at friendly loggerheads. Your father, who had a very just contempt for my powers as a journalist, used, nevertheless, to affirm that I was invaluable to him as an element in the domestic life of his paper. I had, as he was fond of saying in a spirit of friendly raillery, " the University tip," though I greatly doubt whether the presence of any "academic" influence behind the scenes was ever apparent to our readers. The theory, a very favourite one of his, that he trusted me to keep him within bounds, was simply a joke. We did, indeed, discuss everything together with the greatest freedom. But it invariably ended in his saying just what he always meant to say in just his own very emphatic language. It was all I could do, and that only once in a blue moon, to obtain, as a sacrifice to friendship, the omission of some superfluous superlative.'

The real truth of the matter, Lord Milner believes, is that Stead loved to develop his ideas dialectically, in discussion with some one personally congenial to him but whose habit of mind was as dissimilar as possible from his own.

'How well I remember those daily conflicts ! ' he proceeds. 'They were among the most vivid experiences of my life. It is impossible to give any idea of the force, the copiousness, the dexterity, the intellectual nimbleness, the range of readily available knowledge, the aptness of illustration, with which he would defend even the most extravagant and paradoxical proposition. His instinct led him to provoke criticism, for it was only in reply to criticism that he could bring all his own forces into the field, and certainly no man less resented criticism or took a more keen delight in argumentative encounter. He would go on debating, with the printers screaming for "copy," till he sometimes left himself less than half-an-hour to write or dictate a leading article; then he would dash it off at top speed, and embody in it, with astonishing facility, the whole gist and essence of the preceding discussion.'

Of all the 'men of great and diverse gifts,' whom he has met, Lord Milner can recall none who was anything like Stead's equal in vitality and few who could be compared with him as conversationalists. Stead's conversation, he tells us, was far more brilliant than even the best of his writing.

'I don't suppose (Lord Milner continues) any editor was ever so beloved by his staff, from the first lieutenant down to the office-boy. It was such fun to work with him! The tremendous "drive," the endless surprises, the red-hot pace at which everything was carried on, were rendered not only tolerable but delightful by his never-failing geniality and by that glorious gift of humour, not always apparent in his writing, which made him so fascinating a companion. His sympathy, his generosity, his kindliness were lavished on all who came within his reach.

'Last, but not least, he was endowed with courage, physical and moral, in as great a measure as any man I have ever known. Indeed, if Nature had gifted him with judgment in anything like proportion to his other qualities of mind and character, he would have been in those days simply irresistible. It was the lack of balance – at least so it always seemed to me – which was his Achilles' heel.'

Lord Milner thus concludes:

'One other side of his rich and varied nature, still very fresh in my memory, it is now a peculiar pleasure to recall. At the time of which I am speaking I was a frequent visitor at his house at Wimbledon, and spent many happy hours in the midst of a family life as simple, as unconventional, and as joyous as it has ever been my lot to witness. No man turned more easily from work to play, no children ever had a more genial playfellow in their father. Boy Scouts were not invented in those days; if they had been he would have made a prince of scout-masters, for he had eyes for everything, and was interested in everything – and everybody. He was one of those men who could make a joke or a story out of the smallest incidents of daily life. As a journalist, as a public man, he made enemies, and, to speak frankly, he deserved to make them. For he was a ruthless fighter, always believing himself to be "on the side of the angels," and regarding all weapons as fair to use against the Powers of Darkness – i.e., the other side. But it is difficult for me to believe that he can ever have made an enemy in private life. Looking back to those far-off days of our intimate companionship, I cannot remember one human being – man, woman, or child – within the circle of his radiant personality, who did not regard him as a friend.'

In reading the above we have had inevitably in our mind's eye the Lord Milner whom we know. One of his oldest friends, Mrs. Barnett, gives us in her life of her husband, so long the esteemed Warden of Toynbee Hall, a noteworthy little summing-up of the Alfred Milner of those days. She is describing him as she and Canon Barnett first saw him at Oxford in 1876, in the company of Arnold Toynbee, his greatest friend, but the characterization remained almost equally true of him at the beginning of the 'eighties: 'tall, dignified, and grave beyond his years, weighing evidence on every subject, anxious for the maintenance of absolute justice, eager to organize rather than to influence, and fearful to give generous impulses free rein.' Those generous impulses were to be given free enough rein now and there was to be a good deal less of the 'sobersides' about the young assistant-editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette.*

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Only a very exceptional reader – some student of the history of the London Press, or some essayist concerned with the life of the 'eighties, perhaps – is at all likely to have time and energy enough to go to the back volumes of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in order to see for himself what the 'New Journalism' really amounted to: the bound volumes of a daily newspaper are terribly cumbrous things to handle, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* of Stead's time is scarcely accessible outside the British Museum and the Bodleian. Any such reader must be prepared for disappointment if he has allowed his appetite to be too keenly whetted by the foregoing extracts. The 'first fine careless rapture' of Stead and his colleague, working under the conditions described, is not to be thus recaptured two-score years later by even the warmest sympathizer. The lively issues which came so hot from the press and which caused so much excitement and amusement, so much admiration in some circles, so much anger in others, have a disappointingly staid look about them bound up together in those bulky tomes. The revolution from the Morley *régime* is not so very noticeable. It does not, as the French say, leap to the eyes. There is an increasing number of interviews – a novelty then in England; illustrations – also a new feature in daily journalism – become more and more frequent; the headlines are more unconventional; but one has really to study the pages attentively in order to realize the full extent of the change. Half a dozen 'escapades' (to use Stead's own words which serious people cite as a proof that he was never to be taken seriously) stand out from all the others that marked the two years from August 1883 to June 1885:

1. The agitation in October 1883 – based upon a booklet entitled, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* – for immediate and systematic efforts to improve the conditions of the poor.[1]
2. The issuing of a circular in December 1883, to all Liberal M.P.'s catechizing them in regard to the measures to be introduced by Mr. Gladstone's Government in the impending Session – a step viewed with much anxiety and disapproval by the Premier and his colleagues, as being calculated to bring very unwelcome pressure to bear on them and impair their authority.
3. The famous interview with General Gordon, printed on January 9, 1884, which resulted in the Khartoum expedition, and in the long journalistic campaign to which the Government's inaction and vacillation gave rise.
4. The publication of the 'Truth About the Navy' in the autumn of 1884.
5. The effort to pave the way for Imperial Federation by the putting forward of a scheme by Lord Grey in January 1885.
6. The appeal for a resort to arbitration in the Penjdeh affair in May 1885.

Milner, in an article which he wrote in 1885, described Stead very delightfully as a compound of Don Quixote and Phineas T. Barnum – a description particularly apt at the moment, for it was the period of Barnum's zenith as well as of Stead's. There was a good deal of the schoolboy also in Stead, and it is curious to note how inextricably mixed are these three elements in the very first of the 'escapades.'

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[1] Mr. G. R. Sims had pointed the way for this agitation in his moving series of articles 'How the Poor Live.'

As all who knew him can attest, Stead was sincerity itself in his love for, and devotion to, the less fortunate of his fellow-men – he never spared either his time or his purse in his efforts to help them – but his whole-hearted benevolence went hand in hand always with a boyish delight over his own prowess and a showman's eagerness to turn it to practical account. No Rugby three-quarter back ever exulted more in a successful 'run' and a brilliant 'try' than did Stead in 'coups' and 'booms,' and he sometimes out-Barnum'd Barnum in exploiting them. The instantaneous success of the article in which he called the attention of the world to that little penny pamphlet, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, constituted, as he himself records, 'the first great "coup," the first great "boom," of the *Pall Mall* under his editorship.' Besides evoking discussion throughout the whole of intelligent London and thus spreading the fame of the paper, it produced substantial results. 'It led Lord Salisbury to take action,' Stead claims, and the claim can scarcely be disputed; 'and caused the appointment of that Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor from which modern social legislation may almost be said to date.'

Stead's second 'coup,' the circular to the Liberal M.P.'s, was scarcely less effective in its different way. His opponents had predicted that he would not get twenty replies, but he received a hundred and seventy, of which a hundred were detailed and explicit. The annoyance and jealousy of the other London newspapers must have been food and drink to the triumphant innovators – to Milner almost as much as to Stead. It was, of course, a perfectly legitimate, as well as a very original, piece of enterprise; but in the eyes of one rival this 'prying into other people's business' was quite 'unworthy of English journalism'; another bewailed the lost 'English pluck of public men' and the days when 'busybodies' would have been kept in their places; while a third condemned the 'craven spirit' of the Liberal Members who thus pusillanimously 'truckled to the Press.'

Gordon's mission to Khartoum and the campaign for a stronger navy were two of the outstanding episodes in Stead's life and they call for detailed treatment in separate chapters. In the eyes of a large section of Stead's admirers the telling of the 'Truth About the Navy' was his greatest achievement; in the words of one of these admirers, Mr. J. L. Garvin, Stead's action led 'to what was little less than a renaissance of British sea power. . . . His work for the Navy was the work of a statesman, full of the true vision of patriotism, and it would have been enough of itself to ensure memory for any career, and to keep that memory high.'

The Imperial Federation discussion was at least an immense *succès d'estime*. It is a temptation to reproduce here some of the exhilaratingly vigorous and buoyant paragraphs wherein Stead summarized and supported the 'practical suggestion' which he had persuaded the venerable Lord Grey to formulate – or rather to revive, for he had already formulated it nearly six years earlier in the *Nineteenth Century* for April 1879. Then it had fallen flat, apparently. Now Stead 'starred' it in a fashion which must have brought much joy to the heart of its author. The suggestion was that, as a step towards Imperial Federation, it would be well to reconstitute the Committee of Privy Council for Trade and Plantations formerly attached to the Board of Trade, and attach it as a Colonial Council to the Colonial Office; the High Commissioner for Canada and the Agents-General for the Cape, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, and New Zealand, to be members of this Council, to which the Crown might also nominate representatives of the Crown Colonies.

The Marquis of Lorne opened the debate, commending Lord Grey's proposal warmly to 'the best consideration of the Government.' Lord Blachford followed with some caustic criticisms, avowing himself, moreover, no sympathizer at all with Stead's ultimate hopes of 'a great Anglo-Saxon alliance' which should include the United States; he could not quite believe, he intimated, that 'Anglo-Saxons – the great exterminators of aborigines in the temperate zones – would, when confederated, set a new and exceptional example of justice and humanity.' Then came a pleasant interview with Lord Dunraven, mildly approving the plan as a step in the right direction, and an article by Mr. Reginald B. Brett, M.P., the future Lord Esher, already a staunch ally of Stead's, who declared the suggestion an important one and showed, very interestingly and effectively, how it had been 'undervalued by Mr. Morley and misunderstood by Mr. Bright.' Among many other distinguished people who joined in the symposium were the High Commissioner for South Africa, Sir Hercules Robinson (Cecil Rhodes and Stead were not yet acquainted or we may be sure that he also would have been made to express himself); the Governors of New South Wales and South Australia; and the Prime Minister of New Zealand. A number of other men of distinction wrote long communications for Stead's use but not for publication, over their own name; Lord Dufferin was one of these. The majority were decidedly against Lord Grey's project. 'The idea, as we have made it our duty to ascertain,' Stead had concluded his introductory article by declaring, 'would probably be warmly approved by the Colonies, and if it is not vigorously supported by the Agents-General it is because they naturally shrink from what might be misrepresented as a magnifying of their own office.' This would seem to have been one of Stead's over-sanguine assumptions. 'What you should really say,' one of the Agents-General wrote to him in a frank but friendly letter, 'is that the scheme is not only "not vigorously supported by us" but that there are at any rate two of us by whom it would be "vigorously" opposed.'

As we know, nothing tangible came of it at all; but the discussion cleared the air and it made excellent 'copy.' Moreover it added immensely to Stead's prestige and widened the circle of his influence.

Nearly every reader of these pages, probably, will have read Lord Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, that masterpiece of sympathetic biography. Gladstone himself is reported to have said of Purcell's *Life of Manning* that 'it left nothing for the Day of Judgment.' No one, assuredly, could say that of Morley's Gladstone. It is a wonderfully fine book, but just as Whistler in the famous portrait of his mother was, as he himself confessed, chiefly concerned to make the dear old lady 'look nice,' so Lord Morley is at pains to admit into his narrative almost nothing that could diminish his hero's glory. Lord Morley resists all the many opportunities for the exercise of his great gift of ironical humour which were afforded by what may be called the Artful Dodger side of the Grand Old Man.

In the Penjdeh affair of 1885 he had such an opportunity – so one would have thought; but in this case, quite clearly, he is not merely turning a blind eye, he is genuinely blind to the aspect of Gladstone's action which to many others – to dispassionate onlookers, as well as to censorious opponents – seemed really comic in its excessive artfulness.

Here is Lord Morley's very succinct account of how the dangerous Afghan controversy arose:

'The question had been raised a dozen years before without effect, but it was now sharpened into actuality by recent advances of Russia in Central Asia, bringing her into close proximity to the territory of the Ameer. The British and Russian Governments appointed a commission to lay down the precise line of division between the Turcoman territory recently annexed by Russia and Afghanistan. The question of instructions to the commission led to infinite discussions of which no sane man not a biographer is now likely to read one word. While the diplomatists were thus teasing one another Russian posts and Afghan pickets came closer together, and one day (March 30, 1885), the Russians broke in upon the Afghans at Penjdeh. The Afghans fought gallantly, their losses were heavy, and Penjdeh was occupied by the Russians. "Whose was the provocation," as Mr. Gladstone said later, "is a matter of the utmost consequence. We only know that the attack was a Russian attack. We know that the Afghans suffered in life, in spirit, and in repute. We know that a blow was struck at the credit and the authority of a sovereign – our protected ally – who had committed no offence. All I say is, we cannot in that state of things close this book and say 'we will look into the matter no more,' we must do our best to have right done in the matter."'

Lord Morley proceeds to relate how, when Mr. Gladstone on April 27, proposed a vote of credit for eleven millions, of which six and a half were demanded to meet 'the case for preparation' raised by the collision at Penjdeh, he was supported 'alike by the regular Opposition and by independent adherents below his own gangway'; how on May 11 a hostile motion was made from the front Opposition bench and the Government was accused of having 'arranged a sham arbitration' and of being responsible for the murder of 'so many thousand men'; and finally how the question was prosecuted to a happy issue, and how the Conservatives, 'who had done their best to denounce Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville for trampling the interests and honour of their country underfoot, thought themselves very lucky, when the time came for them to take up the threads, in being able to complete the business by adopting and continuing the self-same line.'

Mr. Gladstone's speech in which he moved the vote of a war supply on April 27 is described by Lord Morley as an 'admirable example both of sustained force and lucidity in exposition, and of a combined firmness, dignity, reserve, and right human feeling, worthy of a greater Minister dealing with an international situation of extreme delicacy and peril.'

That is how the incident in general and Gladstone's attitude in particular looked to Morley. Let us see how they strike an entirely impartial historian. Every one agrees, I think, that Mr. R. H. Gretton, in his *Modern History of the English People*, has contrived to hold the balance between the political parties with singular fairness, and that he shows no animus whatever against Mr. Gladstone. Here is his smiling comment on the episode – he has remarked that on this question Gladstone 'showed none of the lack of interest which had been so fatal in Egypt':

> 'But . . . however serious the matter was at the moment, however anxious the diplomatic problem, the fact remains that the Penjdeh incident could be looked back upon afterwards as "a perfect Godsend" from a Liberal politician's point of view.[1] England was so much roused that a vote of credit was passed with no difficulty, the reserves were called out, and every eye was turned upon the possibility of war with Russia. Mr. Gladstone, seizing the opportunity to deplore a distraction of our forces, was able to abandon quietly the whole of the Khartoum problem and in addition to meet the remaining costs of the Soudan expedition, amounting to four and a half million out of a vote of credit already obtained, instead of having to move a separate vote and thereby definitely raise the question of abandoning Khartoum. Thus Mr. Gladstone achieved the feat of satisfying at one and the same time the Radicals, by removing the possibility of more bloodshed in Egypt, and the Whigs, by opposing Russian aggression. The result rewarded his admirable party skill. The Russian menace subsided and by the beginning of May an agreement had been reached which removed all danger.'

Now for Stead's own version. The 'Russian menace' he denied throughout. Always in closer touch with Russia than almost any other Englishman, through his friendship with Madame Novikoff, he had been able in the *Pall Mall* to set out the Russian case as early as February 24 – here it is, as reported to him by Madame Novikoff herself; Sir Peter Lumsden, I may remind the reader, was the British representative on the Afghan Frontier Commission:

> 'Sir Peter Lumsden has taken with him two or three young fellows . . . who imagine that they serve their cause by inciting the Afghans

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[1] Holland's *Life of the Duke of Devonshire*, ii. 31 (Mr. Gretton's footnote).

to occupy positions far in advance of their own frontier. The Afghans, acting under the instigation of these young Englishmen, occupied a position at Penjdeh in territory which had never been under Afghan rule. Our military people, hearing and seeing everywhere evidence of English hostility and English intrigues, immediately responded to the Afghan advance by a further advance on their own account and they went further than was either prudent or useful. Thus a mistake was made on both sides, but the initiative was taken by the English.'[1]

Stead contends that Mr. Gladstone had only to make inquiry in order to ascertain the truth of these assertions, admitted afterwards by the officers themselves, according to Sir Robert Morier, then British Ambassador at St. Petersburg. In any case the *Pall Mall* followed this statement up with untiring persistence and vigour. On March 26 it set forth the salient points of the dispute under six heads, concluding with the following defiant words: 'That is the thesis which we challenge all those who are denouncing Russia's conduct in this matter to answer before they venture to say another word in advocacy of war.'

Day after day Stead returned to the charge, insisting on the folly of war and the necessity for arbitration, and, having reprinted his articles in a *Pall Mall* Extra, entitled 'Fight or Arbitrate?' he dispatched copies of this to every one of influence in the country.

'It is no use, my dear Stead,' Admiral Hobart Pasha, then in the service of the Sultan of Turkey, said to him good-humouredly one day in April, in the course of a discussion in the *Pall Mall* office, 'It is no use. You are all alone. There is not a paper or a politician who is not against you. You are beaten this time. In a few days I shall be off to Constantinople to arrange for the passage of the British Fleet through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea. You've made a good fight but the game's up.'

But the game was not up. By the beginning of May, as we have learnt, the dispute was amicably settled, the British Government acceding to the proposal of Mr. Lessar, the Russian envoy, that Afghanistan should be delimited in London. Throughout the crisis Stead had been the only strenuous advocate of peace in England, and he had won. What had been discovered to be a mere misunderstanding was adjusted without much difficulty and England was saved from a terrible and entirely unnecessary war.

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[1] Stead narrates the whole episode in his record of Madame Novikoff's life, *The M.P. for Russia.*

'Leading articles' are in their very nature ephemeral things, and however characteristic of their writers, they seldom bear reproduction in a book, but there is just one *Pall Mall* leader of Stead's at this period which calls, I think, for citation at some length – one which he printed on New Year's Day 1884 and in which he set forth his outlook on public affairs in general.

'With the possible exception of the Sermon on the Mount,' declared a cynical critic, laughing at this pronouncement, 'no composition with which we are acquainted breathes such a spirit of pure philanthropy.'

I am sure that Stead himself was able to join heartily in the laugh; he had a very jolly sense of humour and he had a particular relish for Biblical comparisons, above all when applied to himself. But extravagant as some of the sentences in it may sound, this article rings true. In it he is at pains to expound as best he may the faith that is in him; and he was to keep to this faith to the end. He begins thus :

'How do we confront the New Year? What vestiges of former faiths still afford to us wayfarers through the Unknown some line of guidance for our future path? Behind us lie the gradually dissolving fragments of the religions, philosophies, and policies with which our predecessors confronted with more or less courage the mysterious problems of existence. It is not so much that destructive criticism, like mordant acid, has eaten away a great deal that was once most firmly held by our fathers; the great decomposer of bygone theories is not criticism but growth, "the old order changeth, giving place to new," and the formulas and shibboleths of a former age shrivel up or fall in pieces before the silent energies of present facts. Evolution is the greatest of all revolutions, for it is a constant factor in the progress of the race. Our creeds and our institutions perish or pass, not because we will, but because they must. Necessity, not logic, abolished the Corn Laws, a not less inexorable authority may one day abolish the House of Commons. In the presence of the great changes slowly accomplishing themselves in the ages – whereby, as we hope and believe with Mazzini, "mankind is slowly ascending the infinite spiral that leads from Humanity up to God," – the insignificance of the individual appears almost infinite. Yet in shaping the future of the world and the race, the individual counts for much, and the faith of great aggregates of individualities counts for more.'

Therefore, he contends, it may not be idle to set forth at the beginning of the New Year the theories of the 'Advanced Left' – the vanguard of the Liberal host. Modern Radicals, he complains, have often been twitted with having aspirations and sentiments but no creed – no organic body of political doctrine comparable with Bentham's. He protests that he and his associates need not trouble themselves over any such reproach; and he proceeds to formulate as follows the five main 'planks' in the *Pall Mall Gazette's* 'platform':

'Our ideals are clear and well defined. We know what we want to arrive at, and we also know the road by which we think it can best be reached.

'First among the great fundamental principles which Liberal opinion tends more and more to accept as the basis for national policy is a sympathetic recognition of that great movement which Professor Seeley has described as the Expansion of England; the Building up of new Empires beyond the sea, the peopling of waste and savage continents with men of our speech and lineage, and the knitting of the world-sundered members of the English realm into one fraternal union, that is the first and greatest task imposed upon us.

'The second springs out of the first. We are peopling the world with the most venturesome of our children, and also, it must be added, with the most lawless and unscrupulous of the race. Everywhere they come into rough contact with the aboriginal inhabitants of the lands which they colonize, and the savage goes to the wall. It is the duty of the Imperial Government to follow the adventurers with its authority, and to restrain the violent impulses of its hardy frontiersmen. Where it is impossible for us to be a terrestrial providence for the natives, we can at least act as the outside conscience of the colonists, reminding them in the midst of the stress and strain of local temptations, of the higher law of justice, and morality, and of right.'

In foreign affairs, Stead proceeds, the ideal of the federation of the people held the field :

'The European Concert of Mr. Gladstone and the Peace Bund of Prince Bismarck are tending in that direction, and thither also point all the attempts to internationalize the waterways of the world. The Anglo-Russian entente in Central Asia and the German-American-British Defence League in Chinese waters are instances of the extension of the same fruitful principle beyond the confines of Europe. In our Empire, as distinct from the Colonies, our object shall be everywhere the same; to govern for the sake of the governed and to judge the success of our policy by the extent to which we have educated the subject populations to dispense with our aid. Every aristocracy exists but in order to dig its own grave. It is the same with Empires. At present we are *in loco parentis* to millions of men of alien race, religion, language, and laws. No sane politician would seriously propose to leave these nations to their own governing any more than anyone would propose to the father of a large family to turn all his children into the streets. But a father who did not train his sons in order that they might dispense with his care, would be only less criminal than he who refused to provide for them in their youth. The ideal of the family must permeate the whole of the relations alike with our own kin beyond the sea and the subject populations which own our sway.'

The *Pall Mall Gazette*'s home policy is no less distinctly marked. Two great ends it will keep ever in view:

'The first is to associate with the responsibilities of government the greatest possible number of the governed. To this end all local forms of self-government shall be developed and extended, and the pale of the constitution widened to admit all householders, male and female, in the three kingdoms.

'The second and the chief object to be pursued under all the forms of political, social, and religious activity is the amelioration of the condition of the disinherited. We are on the side of those who have not; of the poor, the oppressed, and those who have no helper. The supreme test of policies, philosophies, and creeds is the effect which they produce on the average man, the lift which they give to the dim common populations in their struggle upward to sweetness and light. The points of agreement as to what should be done in elevating the conditions of the poor – say, for instance, in improving their homes – are so many that it is a wicked waste of all too scanty resources to dissipate in fighting about differences of detail energies which are imperatively needed for dealing with the crying evils of the time. Better tolerate some forms of class and sectarian ascendancy, mischievous though they may be in many respects, than postpone the social amelioration of the people by an attempt to bring about an ideal equality. To vivify the stagnant squalor of the life of great masses of the population by associated effort, voluntary, municipal, and Imperial, to educate the people by familiarity with the responsibilities of government, and to rear a race worthy of the world-wide destinies of our nation, these are the objects and aims, relying on which the new school of advanced Liberalism will appeal with confidence alike to the conscience and to the intellect of the England of to-day.'

These passages give a very good idea of the spirit animating Stead's editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette* from start to finish. It may be interesting to conclude the chapter with two estimates of what Stead achieved, two records of how he bore himself; one from an avowedly hostile witness – I might almost say an enemy – Mr. Harold Frederic, the brilliant American journalist and novelist; the other from a friend.

Here is Mr. Harold Frederic's, written in 1890:[1]

'The *Pall Mall Gazette* . . . became the very liveliest thing in the way of journalism that England had ever seen. In some respects it was also the best thing England had seen – and then in others it was far and away the worst. But it was rarely commonplace.

'Very soon Stead's personality became one of the controlling forces in English public life. Londoners, and more especially newspaper Londoners, dislike very much to be told that Stead, between the years 1884 and 1888, came nearer to governing Great Britain than any other one man in the kingdom, but to the best of my observation and belief it is true. Naturally, a man of whom this could be thought by anyone must have a very striking personality. Stead thrust *his* bodily into his paper. In about equal parts this personality, thus displayed, seemed to be made up of Chadband, Ignatius Loyola, Lydia Languish, and Giteau. It was a most astounding mixture, I admit, and astonishing results it worked. The paper became one which "everybody" had to read – which nobody could afford to miss. I don't know that it ever reached a very great circulation, except on sporadic issues, because the great bulk of the people of whom I speak have facilities for seeing the evening papers without buying them.

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[1] *New York Sun*, January 1890.

But folks swiftly got into the way of seeing it daily – always with the expectation of seeing something remarkable in it. As a rule they were not disappointed.

'To begin with, it was always a well-written paper. I do not use the phrase in its tiresome English meaning; that is as signifying that all its adverbs and prepositions were correctly arranged and its infinitives nicely kept together ; but it was invariably the most readable paper in London. . . .

'But even more than people read it for these excellences they watched it to see what Stead would do next. No man was ever filled with a greater stock of restless energy – a more incessant desire for work. Strangely variant as his moods were, the necessity for action was always present. Whatever came into his head he had to say. The result was that the closest observers could never quite make out whether he was a fraud, a maniac, or an inspired evangelist. A more self-conscious man never lived. His emotions, fancies, beliefs, whims, passing sensations, were all sacred things to him. This is another way of saying that his self-conceit was gigantic, overshadowing. When he was angry he took it for granted that everybody shared his rage. When he was in hysterics, it was obvious to him that the whole world was weeping tremulously. Secure in this splendid insolence of egotism he attacked this, that, and the other thing which did not please him, and, never doubting his ultimate success, fought away so stoutly and strenuously that other people joined him, his opponents shrank away, and lo! the victory was won.'

The subject of Stead's 'self-conceit' and 'egotism' is a very interesting one, but we may leave it until later.[1] For the moment it will suffice to give as a pendant and corrective to this contemporary comment the following tribute, written in 1912, from Mr. H. W. Massingham, editor of the *Nation*, one of Stead's intimate associates for more than twenty years. Mr. Massingham begins by saying [2] that Stead will live in history 'as the man who made of modern journalism in England a powerful personal force' – he continues:

'He found it a thing of conventions and respectabilities, buried in anonymity, and fettered by party ties. The newspaper was a collective "organ of opinions." He made it the instrument of one intensely individual mind. Stead's main conception of an editor's duty was to be himself. He realized as no one before him had done, and as few who have come after him have dared to do, the power which a newspaper gave him to record himself with headlines and bold type, with recitative and chorus, on a pedestal of fact and news, once in every four-and-twenty hours. His temperament was that of the great pamphleteers. In his boldness and versatility, in his faith in the constructive power of the pen, in many of his opinions, even in his championship of women, he resembled Defoe. . . . It is to us no small service that he cleft a way for personality in journalism, and achieved for it in the world of affairs an independence from party and wealth comparable with the emancipation of literature from patronage. It was a finer and greater service than the lifting journalism to this dignity he made it at the same time the servant of disinterested aims. His power over men's minds came first of all from his ability to interest them. But it had its deeper root in the sincerity which every page of his writing confessed. One instinctively knew that when his writing was most vital, when his pleading was most arresting, when his exposition was most masterly, the sympathy of a singularly humane and kind nature, the passion for justice of a fearless heart, had given force to his pen. He did his best work when he had no thought before him save how best to serve some woman in distress, some class ground down, some people misunderstood. If he was a great journalist, it was because he was first of all a brave and disinterested man.'

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[1] See Vol. II, pp. 13–14.

[2] *Nation*, April 18, 1912.

CHAPTER 6

THE *PALL MALL GAZETTE* AND GENERAL GORDON

The Khartoum Mission, January 1884–*January* 1885

I

THE SENDING OF GORDON

'WHO was responsible for sending Gordon?'

Lord Cromer asks the question in *Modern Egypt*, in the course of his commentary on that long-drawn-out drama of Khartoum in which he himself, as Sir Evelyn Baring, H.B.M.'s Consul-General at Cairo, had played so conspicuous a rôle; and he proceeds to give his own answer. Mr. Gladstone's Government, who 'did not fully realize the importance of the step they were taking,' must, in his opinion, be held ultimately to account for it: but, 'in a sense, the main responsibility rests with the Press of England and notably with the *Pall Mall Gazette*.'

It may be taken, I think, as a generally accepted fact that W. T. Stead, as editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, did, indeed, give the impulse which resulted in General Gordon's Khartoum mission.[1] To what extent does he deserve praise or blame? Most people now are inclined to blame him. Gordon, they declare, was not the man for the task. Is this merely being wise after the event? At the time, beyond a doubt, there seemed good reasons for the selection – reasons good enough to overcome temporarily Baring's own very serious misgivings. In order to appraise fairly Stead's political judgment in the matter, we must seek to see things through the eyes of contemporaries. Ignoring, then, for the moment, all that we have heard of Gordon's inconsistencies and eccentricities during those fateful thirteen months, and all that he himself revealed so unrestrainedly in his *Journals at Khartoum*, let us recall what was known and thought about him in the early days of January 1884. Apart from Stead himself, who, as always, acted to a certain degree impulsively and from intuition – guided by his 'sign-posts,' as he used to say – it is to be noted that the men who were most strongly in favour of the appointment were those who knew Gordon most intimately and who had the greatest personal acquaintance with the affairs of Egypt and the Soudan.

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[1] Mr. R. H. Gretton, in his *Modern History of the English People*, adopts the view which is now general: 'It was probably the first occasion,' he comments, 'on which a newspaper set itself, by acting as an organizer of opinion on a particular detail of policy, to change a Government's mind at high speed.'

Before we come to the memorable *Pall Mall Gazette* interview with 'Chinese Gordon,' which is the beginning of the story, we must try to visualize that truly extraordinary figure. A fellow-Scot, the brilliant Archibald Forbes, painted the portrait of him which was probably best known throughout the British Empire.[1]

'The character of Charles George Gordon (wrote Forbes) is unique. As it unfolds itself in its curiously varied but never contradictory aspects, the student is reminded of the attributes of Sir Lancelot, of Bayard, of Cromwell, of John Nicholson, of Arthur Connolly, of Havelock, of Balfour of Burleigh, of Livingstone, of Hedley Vicars; but Gordon's individuality stands out in its incomparable blending of masterfulness and tenderness, of strength and sweetness. His high nature is made the more chivalrous by his fervent piety. His absolute trust in God guides him serenely through the sternest difficulties. Because of that, he is alone in no solitude, he is depressed in no extremity. The noble character has its complement in a keen sense of humour. No matter how sombre the situation, if there be a comic side to any incident, Gordon sees it and enjoys it. That he has lived through strain so intense and toil so arduous is probably due to the never-failing fountain of blitheness that wells up in his nature. He must be richly endowed with the rare gift of personal magnetism. Without that gift men have attained to greatness, but never with the scantiness of means at command that has thrown Gordon back mainly on the resources of his own personality nor with the scrupulousness that has been one of the most strongly-marked traits in his career.'

For a fuller impression let us turn now to an article contributed by W. T. Stead himself a few months later to the *Century Magazine:*

'It is more than twenty years (he writes) since General Gordon won the strange sobriquet which has clung to him amid all the vicissitudes of a singularly adventurous career. . . . The Chinese Empire, after submitting to a peace dictated by the Allied Powers amid the ashes of the Imperial Palace, was threatened with ruin by the rebellion of the

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[1] *Chinese Gordon:* a sketch of his life. By Archibald Forbes. Routledge, London, 1884. The book went through many editions.

Taipings. The heart of the Empire had fallen into the hands of the rebels who, under Ching-Wang, a kind of Chinese Mahdi, had routed the armies of China and menaced the dynasty with overthrow. For five years Shanghai itself was only preserved from capture and loot by the presence of a British garrison. Repeated attempts were vainly made by the Chinese authorities to win back their lost provinces; but as year after year passed by it seemed as if this cancer preying on the vitals of the Empire would eventually destroy it. At the beginning of 1863 the Taipings, numbering 100,000 fighting men, occupied the whole of the country stretching from Shanghai to Nankin. They held every walled city for a distance of several hundred miles to the South and West. Inflamed with fanaticism, flushed with victory, they were in undisturbed possession of the garden of China. Their headquarters at Soochow, a strongly fortified citadel, commanded the whole province. The towns and villages were in ruins and vast tracts of country were depopulated. It was while affairs were in this position that Gordon, then a major in the British Army, was appointed to the command of the Imperial forces. They consisted of 4,000 Chinese mercenaries, officered for the most part by foreign sailors with a turn for filibustering, undisciplined and demoralized by repeated defeats. In addition to this rabble Gordon had nothing to rely upon beyond a firm base, ample munitions of war at Shanghai, and a couple of steam tugs. The situation seemed a hopeless one and Gordon might well have despaired. But Gordon was not a man given to despair. As was said of another whom in many respects he much resembles, "Hope shone in him like a pillar of fire after it had gone out in other men."

'Their faith was justified by his works. In twelve months after he assumed command he had suppressed the Taiping rebellion. With his handful of natives, reinforced, as the campaign went on, by prisoners captured in the field, he defeated the rebels and stormed their fortresses one after another, until on his recall he left the Chinese Government in a position to overturn the last stronghold of the rebellion in the city of Nankin. Never had a victory more brilliant been achieved with forces so inadequate, and seldom had the genius of a commander been more conspicuous in the transformation which it wrought in the fortunes of war. Because he crushed the Taipings and saved China he acquired the name of Chinese Gordon; and because he had proved his ability to do such marvels in China, he was this year dispatched to Khartoum to accomplish a task from which an army might have recoiled. It was not an unfounded expectation that a man who, with 4,000 unwarlike Chinese, could crush the Taiping insurrection, might be able with the aid of the 6,000 Egyptians in Khartoum, to secure the evacuation of the Soudan. To reconquer a province studded with fortresses and garrisoned with 100,000 men was a far more formidable enterprise than the extrication of some scattered garrisons from the valley of the Upper Nile. Gordon, who had done the one, was confident that he would not find it impossible to do the other. That confidence was shared by his countrymen, and in that lies the secret of his mission to the Soudan.'

As Stead implies, Gordon's miraculous success in China had a good deal to say to his being chosen for the new post in which a miracle-worker was likely to find so much scope; but they would not have sufficed of themselves. His record as Governor of the Equatorial Provinces of Central Africa, in succession to Sir Samuel Baker, from 1872 to 1876, and as Governor-General of the Soudan during the years 1877 and 1878, counted for still more. His exploits in these regions were scarcely less wonderful. Even as recorded in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (whose habitual sobriety of tone provoked Canon Ainger's famous witticism about 'No Flowers. By Request'), they can scarcely be read without a thrill.[1] A later passage in Stead's *Century* article will serve at once to conjure up a vision of Gordon's bearing as a beneficent despot in Southern Egypt and to explain the circumstances which had now seemed to call for his return thither:

'The Soudan, or the Black Country, is a vast and undefined region stretching south of Egypt to the Equator; the greater part of it is desert, and although its area exceeds that of India, its population is not three times that of the State of New York.[2] Along the river, however, there is a strip of verdure, and in the southern and south-western provinces, especially in the country between the two Niles and that near the Lakes and the source of the White Nile, the soil is very rich. 'Khartoum, the capital of the whole region, and situated at the junction of the two Niles, is an important commercial centre. The Egyptian Government in the Soudan was a mere matter of periodical pillage, accompanied by the torture of men and the ravishing of women. Its only redeeming feature was that it prevented internecine wars. . . . The system of Government was essentially Turkish. When General Gordon was appointed Governor-General he informed Ismail, the late Khedive, thrice over, that his appointment would be fatal to the continuance of the old system. "Never more," said he, "will Egypt be able to govern the Soudan in the old Turkish or Circassian fashion after I have resided there long enough to teach the people that they have rights. If you send me you must continue my system or lose the Soudan." Ismail was deaf to the warning. . . . Gordon's successor did not continue Gordon's system and the result is before us. Egypt has lost the Soudan exactly as Gordon predicted. The attempt to restore the Circassian system, with its corruption, its bastinado, its pillage, and its Bashi-Basoukeri among people who had been governed on English principles by an Englishman so upright and inflexible as General Gordon, led to a widespread revolt.

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[1] On the strength of these achievements Lord Dufferin, in a dispatch regarding the Soudan dated Cairo, November 16, 1882, had written: 'If only some person like General Gordon could be found to undertake the administration, fairly good Government might be maintained there without drawing upon Egypt for either men or money.'

This was the first mention of Gordon's name in connection with the problem.

[2] In 1884.

' "I have laid the egg," said General Gordon to me at Southampton, "which the Mahdi has hatched. I taught the people that they had rights. Everything has sprung from that." '

The widespread revolt – 'the egg which the Mahdi had hatched' – had for some months past been evoking intense anxiety in England as well as in Egypt when the year 1884 opened. The Egyptian troops which had been sent to the relief of Tokar had been totally defeated on November 4, Captain Moncrieff, R.N., British Consul at Jeddah, losing his life in the engagement. A fortnight later had come the annihilation of the force of Hicks Pasha in Kordofan, he himself and his staff and the war correspondents who accompanied him being all killed – a misfortune which had caused a feeling of depression all the deeper by reason of the mystery surrounding it. From the Soudan there came reports of the fall of town after town. Osman Digna, in alliance with the Mahdi, was threatening Suakim. Tokar was in increasing peril. Massowah was declared to be unsafe. At Cairo preparations were being made for the relief of the Red Sea garrisons. So far, there had been nothing but failure and a sense of impending catastrophe prevailed.

This was the situation when, on January 8, it suddenly became known in London that 'Chinese Gordon,' after a year's seclusion in Palestine, where he had been absorbed in Biblical research and meditation, had come back to England *viâ* Brussels where he was reported to have concluded an arrangement with King Leopold to go to the Congo as an administrator, under Stanley, of the so-called International Association.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* had been the first London paper to get news of this appointment and, on January 4, had printed a paragraph, evidently from Stead's own hand, lamenting that at a time when so much work was 'urgently wanting to be done in Egypt' the services of the 'ablest leader of irregular forces' England had produced should thus be lost to the country. While the rest of the London Press now echoed this cry Stead, very characteristically, took action, telegraphing to Gordon, to his Southampton home, for permission to visit him for the purpose of discussing the Soudan problem. Gordon replied that his views were 'of insufficient importance' to warrant a journey from London, but Stead persisted and had his way.

In many of the subsequent interviews which were to be so noteworthy a feature of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Stead took pains to record in some detail the surroundings of his subjects; but in this case he was too much absorbed in what he was hearing to pay much attention to inessentials; we have to imagine the scene as best we may for ourselves: the sitting-room with its three occupants, Gordon, Stead, and Gordon's intimate friend – from this date onwards, one of Stead's own closest allies – Captain Brocklehurst.[1] Stead, so he tells us, sat on 'a couch covered with a leopard's skin': no difficulty in picturing him! – all nerves, restless, excited, voluble at moments but for the most part a rapt listener, those strange pale-blue eyes of his fixed on Gordon's own, not unlike in colour though so different in expression. Brocklehurst, handsome, refined-looking, keeping almost complete silence, one imagines – full of admiration for Gordon; interested and puzzled by, but surprisingly taken with, this impetuous, exuberant newspaper-man, not quite like anybody he had ever seen before. Of Gordon we have Stead's description: 'Slightly built, somewhat below the average height, General Gordon's most remarkable characteristic at first sight is a childlike simplicity of speech and manners. Notwithstanding his fifty years, his face is almost boyish in its youthfulness, his step is as light and his movements as lithe as the leopard. Although he is still excitable and vehement, those who know him best say that he has under much firmer control those volcanic fires which blazed out with fiercest fury in his younger days; as, for instance, when he hunted Li Hung Chang, revolver in hand, from house to house, day after day, in order to slay the man who had dishonoured and massacred the prisoners whom he had pledged his word to save. But there is that in his face at times even now that contrasts strangely with the sweetness of his smile or the radiance which lights up his face when discoursing on his favourite author and the choice texts of the *Imitation* . . . 'This,' said he, holding a small copy of the *Imitation* in his hand, 'is my book! And although I shall never be able to attain to the hundredth part of the perfection of that saint, I strive towards it – the ideal is here.'[1]

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[1] Afterwards General Brocklehurst, and raised to the Peerage in 1914 as Lord Ranksborough.

The talk began with the Congo. It had been the news of Emin's difficulties in Equatoria, Gordon explained, that had made him anxious to carry out at once the Congo project which, at various periods during the preceding years, King Leopold and he had discussed together. His own idea, now, was to join hands with Emin (very much as Stanley succeeded in doing later), but *to advance and conquer*, *not merely to rescue and retire*. Unfolding a map of Africa, Gordon expounded his plans. 'Stanley,' he said, pointing to a place on it, 'is here. I go to join him. He is nominally above me, but we shall really be equals in the command.'

'Then you will quarrel!' Stead remarked.

'No,' replied Gordon, 'I am not afraid.'

'But you will!' insisted Stead. 'Stanley is of a very different mettle from you.'

'No,' said Gordon: 'if it is God's will, it will be done. We will go there. I will strike northwards and eastwards from the Congo to the Equatorial Lakes, arming the natives and driving out the slave trade at its source. Ten degrees north of the Equator, the Arabs, descending the Nile, spread to the West Coast of Africa forming a belt of Mahommedan States across North Central Africa. They could not come below ten degrees because their camels would not live. . . . I propose to strike northwards towards the line of the Mahommedan States so as to narrow the area of the No-Man's-Land where the slave traders ply their calling.'

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[1] There are curious discrepancies in the accounts of Gordon's appearance given by his various friends. In *Portraits of the 'Eighties*, for instance, Mr. Horace Hutchinson, who as a boy knew him well, speaks of his eyes as being 'light grey' in colour. Sir Rivers Wilson, as cited in Mr. Wilfrid Blunt's *Gordon at Khartoum*, describes him as 'the strange, unpretending little man with eyes like blue diamonds.'

He showed me a map with the slave routes marked in red, published, I believe, by the Anti-Slavery Society.

'Here,' said he, 'I believe the great work will be accomplished.'

Gordon's eyes glistened, Stead tells us, and he looked like some prophet, seeing the long-hoped-for consummation.

But it was to discuss the region of the Nile, not the region of the Congo, that the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* had hastened to Southampton. What did Gordon think about the burning question of the hour – was the Khedive's Government to be forced by England to abandon the provinces of Lower Egypt, as being unable – in Baring's opinion and in that of most people – to maintain its rule there any longer? And, if so, what was to be done about saving the garrisons in Khartoum, Darfur, Bahr-el-Gazelle, and Gondokoro?

As was his wont, Gordon replied pungently and decisively. The provinces of Darfur and Kordofan would certainly have to be abandoned, he declared, but the Eastern Soudan was indispensable to Egypt – all the region east of the White Nile and north of Senaar. There was no danger of the Mahdi marching northward through Wadi Halfa. The real danger to be feared was something quite different and arose from the effects upon other Mahommedan races of the rumours which were current of the Mahdi's successes – rumours which were causing fermentation already in Syria and Arabia. 'I see it is proposed to fortify Wadi Halfa,' he exclaimed, 'and to prepare there to resist the Mahdi. You might as well fortify against a fever.'

What was essential immediately, Gordon continued, was the defence of Khartoum at all hazards. There was no serious difficulty about it and it would result in the Mahdi's forces falling to pieces of themselves. In any case the immediate evacuation of any of the garrisons was out of the question. Where were the camels to be got to take them away? The great evil, really, was not at Khartoum but in Cairo. Put Nubar Pasha's firm hand at the helm of Egypt and the situation would be saved. Nubar, who was the one supremely able man among Egyptian Ministers, would probably appoint a Governor-General at Khartoum with full powers. Sir Samuel Baker might be the man.

As for the Mahdi himself, Gordon refused to believe that he was in any sense a religious leader. All the Soudanese were potential Mahdis, just as all the Egyptians were potential Arabis. The thing was to give them a good government and make their lot happy. The Soudanese were a 'very nice people' – he knew them well and loved them much. They deserved the sincere sympathy and compassion of all civilized men.

Brocklehurst accompanied Stead back to London that evening and checked his record of the interview at the *Pall Mall Gazette* office next morning – Stead had dictated it during the night to his secretary. 'Only one name wrong,' Brocklehurst was to write long afterwards in a letter to Miss Estelle Stead. 'A truly marvellous effort of memory, for Gordon talked very fast and your father did not take a note.' The interview appeared under the heading –

CHINESE GORDON ON THE SOUDAN

And in a leading article, with the complementary heading –

CHINESE GORDON FOR THE SOUDAN

Stead drew attention to Gordon's views and arguments and insisted on their cogency. The immediate evacuation of the Southern Provines, he urged, would mean the massacre of the Egyptian garrisons and of all the Europeans for whose lives we were responsible. Khartoum must hold out. Colonel Coetlagon, the officer in command of the garrison there, must do his best 'like many an Englishman before him,' against overwhelming odds. In the meantime, what could be done to help him? It was agreed that no army was available, either English or Egyptian. There was one thing only they could do – send a man who in similar circumstances, on more than one occasion, had proved himself more valuable than a whole army. Send Chinese Gordon to Khartoum! Give him full powers to assume absolute control of the territory, to treat with the Mahdi, to relieve the garrisons and to do what could be done to save what could be saved from the wreck of the Soudan. The article ends thus: 'He may not be able single-handed to reduce that raging chaos to order, but the attempt is worth making, and if it is to be made, it must be made at once. For before many days General Gordon will have left for the Congo and the supreme opportunity may have passed by.'

On January 18, after an urgent exchange of telegrams between Lord

Granville and Lord Cromer (of which more anon), Gordon, after a brief interview at the War Office with Lord Hartington, Lord Granville, Lord Northbrook and Sir Charles Dilke, was sent out to Egypt by the British Government 'to report upon the best means of effecting the evacuation of the Soudan.'

Somebody, some day, may be able to record fully and explain the British Government's strangely prompt adoption of Stead's advice; but that day is not yet. Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, in his *Gordon at Khartoum*, investigates the matter with an ingenuity worthy of Sherlock Holmes, his theory covers the origins of Stead's action no less than its results. Stead, he maintains, was merely the tool of the Imperialist section of the Cabinet as personified in Lord Hartington, Lord Northbrook, Lord Granville, and Sir Charles Dilke, with Sir Garnet Wolseley, Adjutant-General of the Forces, and Mr. Reginald B. Brett (the present Lord Esher), Lord Hartington's Private Secretary, lending a hand behind the scenes. Knowing that they could never persuade Mr. Gladstone to commit himself to the intervention which they themselves urgently desired, the four Cabinet Ministers ('more rogues politically than fools,' Mr. Blunt characterizes them) plotted together to send out Gordon, *nominally* to report, but really to act as the spirit might move him. They knew that Gordon's spirit was essentially soldierlike and combative, and they felt confident that, of his own accord and without in any way claiming their authority, he would make an armed intervention by England inevitable. Mr. Blunt is a very frank and unsparing censor of Mr. Gladstone's Government of that time; detached, impartial people are apt, as a rule, therefore, to discredit his statements and to discount his arguments. In this particular case, however, he has won the support of an advocate, subtler and more skilful than himself, and more detached and impartial than almost anybody else living – Mr. Lytton Strachey, author of that famous book, *Eminent Victorians*.

It is necessary for us, as well as extremely interesting, to consider what both these investigators have to say on the subject. I shall begin by citing the really excellent passage wherein Mr. Strachey touches upon the transformation in Gordon's status and outlook which followed upon the printing of Stead's interview in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Having recapitulated in a sentence or two Gordon's multifarious achievements (which in the earlier part of the essay have been brilliantly described), Mr. Strachey proceeds:

'. . . and now, after a long idleness, he had been sent for – to do what? – to look after the Congo for the King of the Belgians. At his age, even if he survived the work and climate, he could hardly look forward to any subsequent appointment; he would return from the Congo, old and worn out, to a red-brick villa and extinction. Such were General Gordon's prospects on January 7, 1884. By January 18 his name was on every tongue, he was the favourite of the nation, he had been declared to be the one man living capable of coping with the perils of the hour; he had been chosen, with unanimous approval, to perform a great task and he had left England on a mission which was to bring him not only a boundless popularity but an immortal fame. The circumstances which led to a change so sudden and so remarkable are less easily explained than might have been wished. An ambiguity hangs over them – an ambiguity which the discretion of eminent persons has certainly not diminished. But some of the facts are clear enough.'

And Mr. Strachey proceeds to devote ten or eleven pages of exposition and analysis to these facts. His reading of them accords in the main with Mr. Blunt's, though his incentive to the inquiry is so different. Mr. Blunt is out chiefly to find material for making Mr. Gladstone look foolish and for incriminating Lord Cromer. Mr. Strachey's quarry is the disillusionizing truth.

Both writers are at pains to emphasize the very definite cleavage in the Cabinet between the four Ministers already named, on the one hand, and on the other a less influential minority, anxious to withdraw from Egypt altogether and at once; while, as Mr. Strachey says, the great bulk not merely of the Cabinet but of the Liberal Party, 'with Mr. Gladstone at their head, preferred a middle course.' Having marshalled all the available evidence on the point – including everything to be found in the official biographies of the 'eminent persons' aforesaid, whose 'discretion' he has lamented, Gladstone, Granville, Hartington, and Dilke among them – Mr. Strachey asks whether it does not point unmistakably to the existence of a plot, or at least a disingenuous understanding, between Gordon and his friends, Wolseley and Brett, and the four Ministers. It seems manifest to him that the words contained in his instructions, 'to report upon the best means of effecting the evacuation of the Soudan,' were a mere blind. 'Is it credible,' he asks, 'that Gordon, who was "before all things a fighter, an enthusiast, a bold adventurer," could possibly have been entrusted by these Ministers "with the conduct of an inglorious retreat" – especially in the face of the published utterance in which he had advocated vigorous military action. And is it conceivable that he would accept such a mission?' A brief *résumé* cannot, of course, do justice to a long and elaborate piece of reasoning. The reader whose appetite I may have whetted, and who has not already made acquaintance with Mr. Strachey's book or with Mr. Blunt's, should read them both. Both writers deal with the matter in great detail. Here I must be content with a briefer treatment of it. Mr. Blunt's book was published during Stead's lifetime, in 1911, almost simultaneously with Mr. Bernard Holland's *Life of the Duke of Devonshire*, in which the latter's degree of responsibility regarding Gordon is plainly indicated. Stead dealt with the two works together in a long article in the *Reveiw of Reviews*. His reply is to Mr. Blunt, but he is replying in advance also to Mr. Strachey. Mr. Strachey, it should be noted, does not include this article in the formidable list of authorities affixed to his essay.

After summarizing Mr. Blunt's theory, Stead contends that the biography of the Duke shows quite unmistakably that he was the last man in the world to play the rôle imputed to him. 'The Duke,' he declared, 'was inertia itself. His don't-care-a-damn frame of mind made him incapable of acting until fully roused, and then all he did, as a rule, was to impose a veto upon the action of others. . . . His strength was to sit still.' Stead proceeds:

'For Mr. Blunt's theory of the subtle intrigues of Lord Hartington for the annexation of Egypt, carried out by the dispatch of General Gordon, it is necessary to prove that I, W. T. Stead, then editing the *Pall Mall Gazette*, was his active agent. . . . To this my answer is that Mr. Stead never had any communication either directly or indirectly with Lord Hartington during the whole of that period. As a matter of fact, I never met Lord Hartington in my life. When editing the *Northern Echo* I used to make his life a bit of a burden to him, so he said in after years, by sending him letters pointing out where he had blundered in his speeches on the Eastern Question, but after I came to London even this slender channel of communication was dried up. I had nothing to do with Lord Hartington and he had nothing to do with me. He certainly never took the least trouble to inspire the articles I wrote in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

'But Mr. Blunt will no doubt reply that although Lord Hartington had no communication with Mr. Stead, Lord Esher (the Hon. Reginald Brett) was the medium through whom the communication passed. To which the answer is that I had never met Mr. Brett, nor had any communications with him orally, directly or indirectly, or through any intermediary until after General Gordon had left Cairo.

'The fact is that Mr. Blunt suffers from the Superstition of the Portfolio. If a man has a portfolio and a seat in the Cabinet he becomes at once a statesman who governs and directs. If a man has a newspaper and occupies an editorial chair he is of necessity of his position the puppet of the portfolio holder. That the statesman may be in the editorial sanctum and the puppet in Downing Street does not seem to have dawned on Mr. Blunt. But it was a tradition that Northumberland Street had jealously preserved from the time when the Suez Canal shares were bought at Mr. Greenwood's suggestion.

'Mr. Blunt calls attention to the fact that whereas the *Pall Mall Gazette* had strongly advocated the Gladstonian policy in Egypt and the Soudan, it did, after the defeat of General Hicks and the appearance of Osman Digna at Suakim, demand a change of policy based on the recognition of actual facts. He suggests that I yielded to "the same influence" – that of "capitalists and city financiers" – which he declared "set the Press in motion on the question." That is all stuff and nonsense. I yielded to the overwhelming influence of the facts of the situation. Such "new facts" as the destruction of Hicks's army and the revolt of the Eastern Soudan convinced me that a change of policy was necessary, and, as is my wont, I said so emphatically without beating about the bush. But that this could be the result of an independent judgment dealing with the actual facts of the situation is beyond the capacity of Mr. Blunt to conceive. He says: "No one, I think, with any knowledge of journalism can doubt that a conversion so sudden and so violent can have been due to anything less than a Ministerial hint of the very directest kind." He further says that it must have been the "result of private information from within the Cabinet, probably from the War Office and communicated by Brett, who was Hartington's private secretary and his usual intermediary with the Press, besides being an old member of the *Pall Mall*" – p. 164.

'As I have said, I had no communication whatever with Mr. Brett at that time, nor could he ever be described as a member of the *Pall Mall* staff. Mr. Blunt goes on: "For these reasons, too, I refuse to accept as entirely reliable Mr. Stead's claim to absolute independence of official inspiration in the matter of his celebrated interview with Gordon at Southampton, which took place on the day following the General's arrival there. Mr. Stead's genius may very well have conceived the idea of the visit as the particular form in which Gordon was to be advertised; but in view of the series of articles, just alluded to, and knowing as I do the ways of journalism and the close connection there was that year between the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the War Office through Lord Esher, and having, moreover, been myself more than once interviewed by Mr. Stead, I find it impossible not to recognize in the sudden entrance of Gordon into the intrigue one of those manœuvres worked from time to time in the *Pall Mall* columns through Lord Esher's agency."

'We know Lord Esher's position at the War Office, and we know his connection with the *Pall Mall Gazette.* Lord Esher was Gordon's friend. Mr. Stead at the time was not. Lord Esher was conversant with his movements, with his application for leave to serve King Leopold, with the refusal of his leave, and I decline to believe that there was no hint given on which Mr. Stead acted. In every newspaper office there are scores of such journalistic secrets never divulged and easily forgotten, and it seems to me vastly more probable that the Gordon "boom" was one of them.

'Mr. Blunt may decline to believe the truth. He has often done so before, and he may do so again. The right to be a mortal fool, says the American humorist, belongs to every human creature. But Mr. Blunt sometimes presumes too much upon the exercise of this inalienable right.'

'The question,' Stead points out in conclusion, 'was not one of probability. It was one of fact. There would have been nothing whatever dishonourable in his receiving a hint from Mr. Brett. Every newspaper editor must, as a matter of duty, seek information from all reliable sources. But as a simple fact he did not receive any hint, suggestion or communication from Mr. Brett, for the simple and sufficient reason that he was first brought into communication with Mr. Brett two weeks after the Gordon interview took place.'

Stead had an exceptionally good memory and his carefulness in mastering any subject has been spoken of with admiration by many people themselves noted for their thoroughness. 'A man of extraordinary precision and grasp of detail,' Mr. J. A. Spender, for so many years editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, has called him. I think we may assume, therefore, that there is nothing inaccurate in the above statement. Nearly forty years have passed since the events dealt with in it, and Lord Esher confesses that he does not remember at what date he first met Stead, but he has no doubt that Stead's own memory may be trusted on this point as it certainly can on all the others. Lord Hartington, Lord Esher says, was 'not at all keen on sending Gordon,' and neither he nor Lord Esher on his behalf 'made any communication whatever to Stead' at that time. 'Mr. Blunt's theory of a secret plot is all absurd nonsense. Stead started the whole thing.'

Such is Lord Esher's testimony in writing to me and it is clear and definite enough. Lord Milner's mind is equally clear on the subject. He declares that Mr. Blunt's ingenious reconstruction of the incident is all moonshine and imagination. 'I remember the circumstances perfectly,' he adds; 'Stead's rush to Southampton was entirely his own idea. No one had suggested it, and he himself had not the least notion, when he started, what would come out of it.'

II

WHAT STEAD HOPED FROM THE GORDON MISSION

One cannot help speculating as to just how the Gordon appointment looked next day to all those responsible for it. Lord Granville has confessed that at the meeting of Cabinet Ministers hurriedly called together on that 19th of January, he remarked to Lord Hartington: 'We were proud of ourselves yesterday. Are you sure that we did not commit a gigantic folly?' We are not told what Lord Hartington said in answer, but we may assume that he did not violently dissent. Dilke, officialdom incarnate, in whom Gordon's eccentric personality cannot have inspired confidence, was, in all likelihood, of the same mind as Lord Granville. Lord Northbrook, it is just possible, may have been buoyed up by the kind of rather vague, irrational optimism revealed later in some of his despatches. It is more probable, however, that he shared the general uneasiness, and that all the four Imperialist Ministers felt conscious that they had blundered. Most unprejudiced onlookers will conclude, I think, that – to reverse Mr. Blunt's amiable phrase – they all four proved themselves more fools, politically, than rogues.

Wolseley, by this time, was a bit of an optimist in the matter, but *his* optimism had been caught from Gordon. He was one of Gordon's most ardent admirers and, being himself normally of a sanguine temperament, he had come easily to be convinced that somehow or other, in the face of all the incalculable dangers and difficulties, Gordon's genius would win through. He and Gordon had a long talk together on January 15.[1] It was after this conversation, apparently, that he persuaded the Government to entrust Gordon with the mission. There is no doubt at least that Wolseley was heart and soul for the appointment. *He*, we may be sure, was happy on that morning of the 19th.

How was it with Gordon himself? Had he read carefully, and taken in, all the various clauses in those official instructions which he was given and to which Mr. Blunt, in his book, manages to impart so Machiavellian an appearance. While ostensibly authorizing him merely, in the words already cited, 'to report,' they certainly can be construed into granting him *carte blanche* to do anything at all for which he could secure Baring's sanction. From what one knows of his character, one is inclined to surmise that Gordon paid very little attention to the phrasing of that document and that he was absorbed principally in his own kaleidoscopic plans – above all, in that splendid day-dream of a peaceful errand to the Mahdi in which he was to persist until Baring vetoed it.[2] Wolseley had very likely encouraged him not to attach too great an importance to what the Ministers should say to him. The great thing was that the appointment should be secured. 'These men,' one can conceive Wolseley exclaiming impatiently, 'don't know their own mind. Besides, it is really impossible for us here in London to tell what should be done out there. *You go to the Soudan and see things for yourself.* If anyone living can get things right it is you.' To which Gordon, conscious of his own great powers, and confident of Divine guidance in everything he undertook, could make but the one reply, 'I shall go.'

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[1] Here is a version of their talk as reported by a contributor to *Vanity Fair:*

WOLSELEY: 'We have got into an awful mess in the Soudan.'

GORDON: 'It will all come right in the end.'

WOLSELEY: 'I wish I could see it in that way. Matters seem to be going from bad to worse.'

GORDON: 'You needn't worry yourself about that. I *know* it will all come right.'

WOLSELEY: 'How so?'

GORDON, handing him *Thomas à Kempis*: 'Read that.'

Vanity Fair's contributor may have invented all this, but it is very well invented, if so.

[2] A wild, preposterous day-dream in the eyes of most people, but not more foolhardy or impracticable, perhaps, than Cecil Rhodes's palaver with the Matabele Chiefs which ended so triumphantly. Rhodes, one feels sure, would have sided with Stead in applauding the project. A remark made in 1882 by Sir Rivers Wilson to Lord Salisbury (cited by Mr. Blunt in his *Gordon at Khartoum*) should be noted in this connection. Gordon was quite 'impossible,' Sir Rivers declared, for all ordinary Foreign Office work, but 'if *there were anything exceptionally astonishing to do in a wild country he was the man to do it,*' as, for instance, to settle matters with Cetywayo the Zulu King who was then giving trouble in South Africa.

Stead, as we have seen, was full of hope in Gordon's star and Gordon was to have no more ardent and untiring supporter throughout the coming months; but on January 23 we find a note of some anxiety struck in the *Pall Mall* regarding one of Gordon's utterances. As it enables us to realize what Stead himself looked forward to as a result of Gordon's mission, the article in question deserves to be given here almost in full. 'I am going out,' Gordon had declared, 'to cut off the dog's tail, but I cannot prevent its growing again, and I will do nothing to prevent it.' Upon this Stead enlarges as follows:

> 'In other words, he is proceeding to Africa to sever the connection which has prevailed for sixty years between Egypt and the Soudan, but so far as concerns the abandonment of the territory east of Khartoum he is acting against his own judgment, in obedience to the orders of the Home Government. This is a point upon which the public is naturally much interested, and it may be as well for all parties if we set forth as clearly as possible the difference between the views of the Government and those of their representative.'

On the previous evening Sir Charles Dilke, in a speech in the House of Commons, had expounded the Government's attitude in words which to Stead seemed misleading. He proceeds to clarify the situation as it appears to him.

> 'The policy of the Government, framed in accordance with the advice of Sir Evelyn Baring, is to evacuate the whole of the Soudan south of Wadi Halfa with the exception of the coasts of the Red Sea, where the *status quo* is to be maintained for the prevention of the slave trade and the protection of British interests. How far the coasts of the Red Sea extend inland Sir Charles Dilke did not say. The *Daily Telegraph* assumes that the phrase will be liberally interpreted, and it is obviously capable of two interpretations. Either the Government intend to confine themselves exclusively to the coast-line and the ports,

which is apparently what they mean, or they may retain all the provinces that abut on the Red Sea, in which case they will hold more than one-half of the territory which General Gordon thinks should not be abandoned. The provinces of Berber, Suakim and Massowah all are on the Red Sea coast, so that if the wider interpretation is taken the only provinces of the Eastern Soudan to be surrendered will be Khartoum, Dongola and Kassala. General Gordon's opinion is that Khartoum, Dongola and Kassala should not be surrendered. He is, as Sir Charles Dilke said last night, entirely in favour of abandoning Darfur, Kordofan, Fashoda, and the Equatorial Provinces. He is not in favour of abandoning anything else. Sir Charles Dilke declared that the Government have great confidence in the advice they receive from General Gordon. We need not be surprised that the public should look with grave misgivings upon the compulsory adoption of a policy of which he disapproves. There is one broad principle of public policy that has been too much overlooked in the discussion about the Soudan, which, if intelligently applied, would go far to lead the public to a clear understanding of our duty in this matter. We are very loth to oppose either the pre-eminent authority of General Gordon, or the decision of the responsible advisers of the Crown, but we fail to see the necessity for adopting either of the alternative policies upon which they seem inclined to insist. All that General Gordon wishes to secure by holding the Eastern Soudan might, it seems to us, be attained by a much less ambitious programme, while the alternative of absolute abandonment seems to us to leave out of account the responsibilities attaching to the power which is charged with the custody of one of the greatest waterways of the world. In short, while we doubt the necessity of holding the Eastern Soudan, we are more dubious than ever about the necessity for abandoning the Nile. Our interest in the Soudan is limited to the control of the Red Sea littoral and to the maintenance of the freedom and security of the navigation of the Nile. Owing to the cataracts, the Upper Nile as a commercial highway is best approached by the Red Sea from Suakim and the necessity of keeping it open carries with it as a corollary the construction and defence of a railway from Suakim to Berber. But beyond that we do not see any necessity to go. The railway could be made and defended for little more than the cost of the complete evacuation of Khartoum and the other stations on the Nile. The power that holds the Delta is naturally marked out as the proper custodian of the great trade route of North-East Africa. If we ruled in Egypt, we should never dream of allowing the most important gates of the Dark Continent to be closed by savages. It would be rightly regarded not only as an offence against civilization, but as a gross betrayal of the commercial interests of the world. Why, then, should we force such a policy upon Egypt if this course would entail even greater sacrifices than the guardianship of the Nile? What we would propose then, is that Egyptian authority in the Soudan should be limited to the Red Sea littoral and the bed of the Nile, and the trade route between them, including the railway that ought to be built from Suakim to Berber. We would not maintain Egyptian authority over any more territory on either bank than was indispensable to secure the freedom of the waterway, and this, of course, would include Khartoum, Berber, and all the stations on the Blue and White Niles. The tribes on the banks could enjoy their autonomy as much undisturbed by the riverain authority of Egypt as the authority of Roumania and Bulgaria is by the riverain authority of the International Commission of the Danube. At a time when all Europe is engaged in eager rivalry for the right to open up the Congo, we can hardly venture to acquiesce in the closing of the Nile. It would be a sorry sequel to an expedition despatched to secure the freedom of the Suez Canal if its authors were to destroy the great trade route which leads from the Red Sea to the Equatorial lakes.

'There are three different policies. Total abandonment is as universally abandoned as the Western Soudan, the Government would keep the Red Sea littoral, Gen. Gordon would keep all the Eastern Soudan, the alternative which we put forward, while reducing the territorial sovereignty of Egypt in the Soudan to a minimum, would confirm and strengthen her control over the Nile and its approaches. The question is not to be lightly dismissed, but to be considered with the gravity befitting the interests at stake. It is all very well to cut off the dog's tail, but we ought to take care at the same time not to amputate its backbone.'

III

GORDON OR CROMER – WHICH FAILED IN HIS DUTY?

It is strange to read now of the feelings of delight and hope with which the news of Gordon's coming was welcomed in Cairo. On January 19 when Colonel – afterwards General Sir Charles – Watson went into Sir Evelyn Wood's room at the Egyptian War Office, he was hailed with the words 'Embrace me!' Watson, puzzled and amused, inquired 'What has happened?' Wood told him. It was the best thing they had heard for a year, both men agreed.

That same evening Colonel Watson had to take some papers to Nubar Pasha's house for him to sign. Nubar exclaimed to him: 'I am to be congratulated. The weight of the Soudan is off my shoulders. If anyone can manage it Gordon can.'

Even Sir Evelyn Baring himself wore a cheerful aspect that day, though all his apprehensions were, of course, not removed. 'Gordon will be under me and not under Nubar,' he remarked incidentally to Watson. 'Not,' he added, smiling, 'that Gordon will take orders from me or anyone else!'[1]

But the story of Gordon's departure and journey must not detain us here. We must come now to the Cromer-Stead controversy. Who was to blame for Gordon's failure?

This is not a history of the Khartoum mission but merely an attempt to describe Stead's share in the events that ensued and to record his feelings and ideas in regard to them. I cannot, of course, follow the *Pall Mall Gazette* through the endless succession of articles in which Stead and his associates, within the office and without, pegged away at the question with inexhaustible energy and resource, day after day, week after week, month after month. A glance over the contents of a *Pall Mall Gazette* Extra (one of several such) which was issued on February 2, 1884, under the title 'England, Gordon and the Soudan,' will serve, however, just to give a notion of the methods adopted; copies of these pamphlets are seldom to be met with now, though they sold at the time by tens of thousands. Beginning with a rapid *résumé* of all that had happened in Egypt since the Governments of England and France, acting through the Sultan of Turkey and at the prompting of Prince Bismarck, deposed Ismail and set up Tewfik as Khedive in 1879, Stead shows how, step by step, England had been led to assume a virtual although unacknowledged supremacy at Cairo. He explains how Egypt acquired the Soudan and gives an outline of England's recent policy in regard to the country. Then comes the Gordon interview and the leading article already cited, followed by a statement of the number and size and actual condition of the imperilled garrisons, etc., etc. In conclusion, Stead insists on the one condition essential in his view to the success of the mission:

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[1] Colonel (Sir Charles) Watson's Memorandum as to General Gordon's doings in Cairo, January 1884. (From Sir Henry Gordon's Papers.) Printed as an Appendix to Mr. Wilfrid Blunt's *Gordon at Khartoum.*

> 'If General Gordon reaches Khartoum in safety all may be well, but only on one condition. He must be allowed a free hand. He must not be hampered by telegrams and dictated to by officials. He is on the spot. He is loyal and obedient. He knows what can be done better than most men. He knows how to do it better than any man. If we had furnished him with an army we might with more propriety have attempted to control him. As we have left him to his own resources, he should be left to solve the problem in his own way.'

Other pamphlets followed, the last and most famous of the series being the one issued on February 19, 1885, after Khartoum had fallen, entitled *Too Late!* But those other pamphlets and Stead's sayings and doings in the months which followed need not detain us. Here we must leave the *Pall Mall* of 1885 and take a leap forward of twenty-three years.

* * *

We are in April 1908 and Lord Cromer's *Modern Egypt*, with its depreciatory view of Gordon, has just been published by Macmillan. Stead has sought a vent for his feelings already, we find, in a letter to the *Spectator* protesting against its opinion that Lord Cromer had 'dealt with Gordon in a just manner.' The *Spectator*, however, has refused to publish it 'on the ground that Cromer is a great man and that it is insolent to say such things about him.'[1] The *Daily Chronicle*, on the other hand, has welcomed something from him on the subject; and Mr. Balfour, keenly interested, having urged him to re-state his case 'in a form in which we can all see it, for you never can count upon anyone seeing anything in a daily paper,' he decides to reply to Lord Cromer in the *Contemporary Review*.

He begins this *Contemporary* article by reproducing a passage from Lord Cromer's book – a passage from the same page as that already cited in the first paragraph of the present chapter: 'The people of England,' Lord Comer wrote, 'as represented by the Press, insisted on sending General Gordon to the Soudan, and accordingly to the Soudan he was sent. "Anonymous authorship," one of the wisest political thinkers of modern times has said, "places the public under the direction of guides who have no sense of personal responsibility." The arguments in favour of newspaper influence are too commonplace to require mention; but newspaper government has certain disadvantages, and these disadvantages were never more clearly shown, than in the incident now under discussion.'

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[1] From a letter from Stead to the editor of the *Contemporary*.

Having protested that the quotation from Sir George Cornwall Lewis, contained in this passage, was inapplicable inasmuch as there was no real anonymity in the case in question and 'no Minister, diplomat or statesman of our time had ever a keener sense of personal responsibility than those who at that juncture directed the policy of the *Pall Mall Gazette*,' Stead proceeds:[1]

'Lord Cromer implies, although he does not venture to assert, that everything would have gone well, or at any rate nothing would have gone so badly as it did, if the British Press had abstained altogether from interference in the affairs of the Soudan. I do not merely imply, but I unhesitatingly assert, that the only redeeming feature in the whole dreary narrative of the ruin of the Soudan, was supplied by the action of the British Press in sending out General Gordon, and the disadvantages of that action lay solely in the fact, that although it was powerful enough to compel the Government to send him out it had not sufficient power to prevent Lord Cromer from interfering with the execution of that commission in such a way as to render its failure inevitable. The issues therefore fairly join between us, and as the question is one of some historical interest to-day, it will be worth while to examine the evidence on which decision must depend.

'We are fortunate in the fact that the questions at issue lie within very small compass. Lord Cromer became British Agent and Consul General at Cairo on the 11th of September 1883. On the 21st of April 1884, Lord Cromer left Egypt on a visit to England, at which time the success of General Gordon's mission was admitted impossible, as the tribes had risen between Berber and Khartoum, and the only question that then remained to be settled was whether or not he was to be left to perish at his post, or whether any attempt was to be made, by means of a relief expedition, to extricate him from the Soudan. Nothing that happened after April 21st is admissible evidence as to whether Lord Cromer or the Newspapers were justified in the view which they took of the right policy to pursue in the Soudan. The issue may even be narrowed still further. The news of the destruction of General Hicks's army did not reach Cairo until the 22nd of November, and General Gordon was cut off by the rising of the tribes by the 14th of March. The whole drama was therefore confined between those two dates: the 22nd of November and the 14th of March, a period of less than four months, a tragic four months indeed, in which events moved rapidly, and in which the hope of success lay in instant action, vigorous initiative, and a resolute and consistent policy. It is impossible for anyone who reads Lord Cromer's own narrative, in which naturally he places the best construction upon his own inaction, without being painfully impressed by the abundant evidence therein afforded of the absence of those qualities. There was neither instant action, vigorous initiative, nor a resolute and consistent policy, and it is possible that even if all those qualities had been possessed by Lord Cromer, the end might still have been failure; but the *lack* of all those qualities rendered success absolutely impossible. The question, therefore, at issue between Lord Cromer and the Press is: who was responsible for the absence of those pre-requisites of success?'

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[1] Stead, it should be borne in mind, was at no time to be counted among the habitual decriers of Lord Cromer, about whose great achievements in Egypt he often wrote with enthusiasm.

Having glanced rapidly at the progress of events since November 22, Stead cites the following words from Lord Cromer:

'From the 22nd of November it would be false modesty not to recognize that from this time forward I was myself one of the principal actors on the Egyptian stage, not of course to the extent of being responsible for the general policy of the British Government, but rather to the extent of being mainly responsible for the management of local affairs in Egypt. This latter responsibility I accept, only begging that it should be borne in mind that my action had of necessity to conform itself to the lines of general policy adopted in London' (p. 371).

Upon this he proceeds to comment as follows:

'It is no use for Lord Cromer to try to shuffle off his responsibility on to the shoulders of Lord Granville. We may admit to the full that the Government in the end of 1884, pre-occupied with other business, hating, not unnaturally, the prospect of military intervention in the Soudan, failed to realize the necessity for that instant action and vigorous initiative which alone could save the situation. But here we come to the sharp issue between Lord Cromer and the Press. The following passage, written by Lord Cromer himself, lays down the standard by which the merits or demerits of the two parties must be tried. Lord Cromer says: "It may, however, be urged in defence of the policy adopted by Lord Granville, that he does not appear to have received sufficient warning of the possible and indeed probable consequence of inaction. What was most of all required was that an alarm-bell should be rung to rouse the British Public from its lethargy, and show that the consequences of inaction might be more serious than those of action" (p. 367). It is therefore declared, by Lord Cromer, that what was most of all required was the vigorous ringing of an alarm-bell. Who was it that rang the alarm-bell most vigorously, immediately after the news of the destruction of Hicks's army? The material for answering this question is fortunately accessible, and its authenticity is indisputable. We have Lord Cromer's despatches to the British Government on the one side, and the files of the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the other, and I have no hesitation in appealing to Lord Cromer himself as judge in his own case, to compare these two sets of documents, his own despatches and the leaders and interviews in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the last week in November and say, which rang the alarm-bell most clearly. I published an interview with Ismail Pasha, and articles by Sir Samuel Baker, Mr. H. M. Broadley, the gist of all of which was summed up in the last sentences of Sir Samuel Baker's article, which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the 22nd of November. It runs thus: "Not an hour should be lost in deciding upon the plan of operations, which should be under the control of only one responsible individual, who should be unfettered in his action. That person should be an Englishman." Day after day the *Pall Mall Gazette* thundered against the Government for its reluctance to act, and act at once, and warned it, in the most unmistakeable terms, of the necessity of instant action if the whole of the Soudan were not to be in a blaze, and the safety of Egypt itself imperilled.

'During these fateful moments, what was Lord Cromer doing? He was studying the question.'

'Not until the 22nd of December,' Stead goes on to say, 'could "this ever-too-late-Baring" make up his mind to recognize what had been plainly asserted in Northumberland Street a month before, namely, that the time had come for the British Government to make up its mind as to what policy should be pursued in the Soudan, and to insist upon its being carried out. That was on December 22. The Christmas holidays intervened, and it was not until January 4 that he received instructions to insist upon the abandonment of the Soudan; and it was not until the night of January 7 that the Khedive accepted the resignation of Shereef and appointed Nubar Pasha, who accepted cordially the policy of abandoning the Soudan.

'So ends the first act of this great tragedy. During the whole of it we see the Press, instant, urgent, imperious, ringing the alarm-bell day after day, with vehemence and even violence, to rouse an apathetic Government to instant action. Under the influence of the alarm-bell of the Press, we see Lord Granville suggesting the appointment of the one man in all England competent to undertake the task, and we see on the other hand, at Cairo, dawdling indecision and procrastination, a veto placed upon the appointment of the one supremely able man who could have coped with the situation, and only at long last, when six precious weeks had been wasted, was a definite decision arrived at to adopt a policy, without any preparations being made to render the execution of that policy possible. So far as the first act is concerned, there is no doubt as to whether it was the British Press or the British Agent who displayed most of the qualities of statesmanship.'

Here we may turn to an article in the *Review of Reviews* published a fortnight later, in which Stead repeats the whole indictment in still more vigorous language. Having dwelt on Baring's dawdling and irresolution down to the time of Gordon's appointment, he comes to the period when the visit to the Mahdi's camp is summarily forbidden:

'Lord Cromer says that he does not believe Gordon ever seriously entertained this step, which he describes as a "harebrained project." But however harebrained may have been the project, it was less harebrained than the policy of sending one man to do the work of an army corps, and then refusing that man a free hand. The simple fact was that, as Lord Cromer very well knew, it was a terribly risky business going to Khartoum at all. General Gordon was dispatched on a forlorn hope to achieve single-handed by the magic of his presence that which a British army failed to do. He took his life in his hands going to Khartoum; he would not have materially increased his risk if he had ridden into the Mahdi's camp as the bearer of proffers of peace. Lord Cromer's assertion that he would certainly have been made prisoner for life is a mere expression of his opinion as to the chances; and the obstructive, cautious, unimaginative bureaucrat was about the last man in the world whose estimate of the chances deserved to be put into the balance against the instinct of Gordon. What Gordon expected was that he would be kept prisoner for two months as a hostage for Zobeir.

'No one can read the story of how his envoy was received by the Mahdi when, in the following month, he deliberated upon Gordon's offer of peace, without feeling that the presence of Gordon in the Council room might have changed everything. "The Mahdi," said the envoy, "assembled his councillors, and discussed the matter for ten days; then wrote the answer and tore it up. He then talked over matters for ten days more, and wrote another letter which he tore up; after another three days he wrote an answer and sent it by two of his men" (*Egypt*, No. 18, 1884, p. 16).

'The Mahdi's indecision during the twenty-three days of deliberation suggests that if Gordon had been there in person a very different result would have been arrived at. But, alas! Gordon was not present – had been prevented by Lord Cromer from being present. Lord Cromer had given him peremptory orders not to play his one trump card. So the chance of pacification by squaring the Mahdi being lost by Lord Cromer's interdict, the only alternative was to smash the Mahdi or throw up his commission. Gordon was not a man to run away from the post of duty, and he regretfully but resolutely took up the fighting policy which had been thrust upon him by Lord Cromer's unwarrantable and mischievous action in forbidding the visit to the Mahdi.'

Then comes the question of Zobeir Pasha, the ex-Slave Dealer, whom, to the astonishment at first of everybody – though there proved to be method in his madness – Gordon wished to have sent after him to Khartoum. Cromer vetoed the appointment and did not come round to Gordon's view of it until too late, on February 28. On March 16 communication with Khartoum was cut off and Gordon was left alone 'to hold the outpost of civilization against the Mahdist flood.'

Arriving finally at the chapter in Lord Cromer's book in which Gordon is accused of violating his instructions, Stead introduces his own comments thus:

'General Gordon, having been thus left to his doom, stayed at his post loyally endeavouring to carry out his instructions, until he was speared to death when Khartoum was stormed. It might have been thought that Lord Cromer, whose dilatory and incredibly purblind policy cost Gordon his life, would have therewith been content. But, no; in order to extenuate the guilt of sacrificing his victim he seems to deem it necessary to deprive him of his character. The passages in which he sums up the story are insufferable. The insolent, patronizing tone adopted towards a man the latchet of whose shoes Lord Cromer was not worthy to unloose, is more offensive than the slanders by which he endeavours to besmirch General Gordon's reputation.'

Having defended Gordon against these accusations and having recapitulated briefly his counter-charges against Lord Cromer, Stead concludes:

'But it is worst of all when a man who stands thus convicted out of his own mouth of a persistent policy of procrastination and interference which cost Gordon his life should, twenty-three years after the sacrifice was complete, have published so cruel a libel upon the memory of the dead.

'Laertes' passionate words over the dead Ophelia recur to the mind as I read these unworthy pages:

'I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

'If Lord Cromer is not to lie howling, he had better seek a place of repentance with tears. For no sin can be more justly described as mortal than that of aspersing the character of a comrade after he has met his death as the result of your own mistakes.'

IV

SOME COMMENTS ON THE CONTROVERSY

Letters of praise and gratitude poured in on Stead from Gordon's friends and admirers, famous and obscure.

'I can suggest no amendment,' declared Lord Esher after reading the proof of the *Contemporary Review* article, 'Cromer has well deserved his castigation. If he is right, Gordon's statue should be removed from Trafalgar Square. . . . Poor Cromer! Such a fine type of the non-understanding Englishman, without a grain of imagination and not much feeling.'

General Brocklehurst was in Egypt at the moment. Of *his* sympathy and approval Stead could feel secure. 'I always felt Cromer would do this,' Brocklehurst wrote from Assouan on March 15, 'and now he has done it, and it is for us to prove him wrong. *Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner* has always been my favourite saying, in which I absolutely believe, so I've got to stick to it now, sick as I feel. One must remember that Lord Cromer with all his brain is of the earth earthy, and Gordon to him was a Lunatic, no more, no less.' If Cromer had understood Gordon, Brocklehurst continues, there would have been no heroic sacrifice at Khartoum to teach the world that Christ was still a living force. There was comfort at least in that reflection. 'Think of the loss to this poor old weary world.'

There were letters of blame as well, of course, and caustic comments even from some who were not sorry to see Lord Cromer in the pillory. 'I regret, with you,' wrote a distinguished Tory publicist, 'that Lord Cromer should have allowed his personal feelings to have biassed his judgment. At the same time, I do not think that, in putting Lord Cromer in the wrong, you have put yourself in the right. What you once called "Government by Journalism" is, in my opinion, the greatest danger that can befall a State. . . . I do not see how you can evade the whole responsibility. You knew the man with whom Gordon had to deal. Could you believe that Gladstone, drunk with applause and thirsty for more of that intoxicant, would lose a single shout or a single vote to save the officer whom he had appointed? Had you confidence in a feeble cynic like Lord Granville, who urged the appointment of Gordon on the infamous ground that it would be popular at home? Might you not have foreseen that which always happens when intelligence is opposed to imagination and talent is confronted with genius?' Gordon, the writer maintains, had been foredoomed to failure by his dependence upon Cromer. But, he declares in conclusion, Cromer's sins afford 'not the the smallest excuse or palliation' for Stead himself.

I need not give Stead's reply, for his defence is implicit in the preceding pages.

CHAPTER 7

THE 'TRUTH ABOUT THE NAVY' CAMPAIGN

September–December 1884

THE conflict of opinion which prevails about Stead's campaign in favour of an increased navy in the autumn of 1884 makes an entertaining study. Mr. F. W. Hirst, author of *The Six Panics*, well known also for a time as editor of the *Economist*, and Mr. Archibald Hurd, author of *The Command of the Sea* and of a number of other important works on naval questions, may fairly be taken, I think, as representatives of the two opposing camps. Two brief extracts from their respective writings will serve to indicate the gulf that separates them. Listen to Mr. Hirst on the 'Fourth Panic' as he calls it, in the volume above mentioned – published in 1913:

> 'Of popular panic there was no trace; but Mr. Stead and his fellow-conspirators managed to produce a feeling of nervous disquietude in high society, and although the results were small in comparison with later performances, the year 1884 deserves attention as the beginning of a most disastrous expansion in naval armaments in which the provocative impulse has too often been furnished by Great Britain.'

To this may be opposed the following passage from an article contributed to the *Fortnightly Review* for October 1915, by Mr. Hurd:

> 'We have been saved by our panic-built Navy from the worst consequences of war – the invasion of these islands, the disintegration of the Empire, the destruction of our vast mercantile marine, and the strangulation of our ocean-borne commerce, which is the very life-blood of the British people. The panic-built Fleet has also enabled us to save Europe and, it may be, the world from the domination of Germany. Behind the screen provided by the Navy we have been able to train and equip new armies, constitute ourselves, in large measure, the paymasters of the allies, and place at their disposal the industrial resources of the United Kingdom and, in large measure also, of the United States, besides assuring to them and ourselves supplies of raw material which have been readily obtainable, owing to our command of the sea, from British Dominions as well as distant foreign countries.'

Before attempting to balance Mr. Hirst's asperities, as Dr. Johnson might have called them, against Mr. Hurd's assertions, let us refresh our memory as to what Stead's action actually was. He gives a very interesting record of it in the *Review of Reviews*.[1]

He begins by making it clear that while he himself, as we all knew, played the principal rôle in the affair, he cannot lay claim to having been the prime-mover in it, and that, as a matter of historical fact, it was originated by Mr. H. O. Arnold-Forster, the nephew and adopted son of W. E. Forster, with whom Stead had been in such close alliance over Russia and in such violent antagonism over Ireland. 'I am sending you by this post,' he wrote to Arnold-Forster in July 1897, 'a copy of the *Review of Reviews* in which I tell the story of the rebuilding of the Navy. As it was you who started the whole thing, so far as I am concerned, I have taken the liberty of saying so.'[2]

It was in August 1884 that Arnold-Forster, then in his twenty-ninth year, called at the *Pall Mall Gazette* and, 'in his brusque, abrupt fashion,' as Stead expresses it, asked the Editor when he was going to take up the question of the Navy.

'His brusque, abrupt fashion' – the words will call up for many people a vivid recollection of that high-minded, strenuous, combative, cock-sure, uncompromising personality, so like Stead himself in some things though in most things his very opposite. Arnold-Forster's outward aspect and bearing presented a singular contrast with Stead's. While Stead was hail-fellow-well-met with every one and overflowing with high spirits and good humour, Arnold-Forster (outside the circle of his very happy home) was stand-offish, unresponsive, unsmiling, peremptory. 'Shall we begin by assuming today that we are all damned fools and so get at once to business?' was the mild sarcasm on which a member of Lord Cardwell's War Office Committee is said once to have ventured after long toleration of that great man's masterfulness. People who had to sit in council with Arnold-Forster must often have been similarly tempted to rebel. His dogmatism and self-assertiveness went beyond all limits. In the early 'nineties, when he was in control of the educational books department of Cassell & Co., I was a junior member of the editorial staff of that famous firm. We all respected Arnold-Forster at Cassell's – his private secretary idolized him; but his methods and mannerisms came in for much comment. When, in 1892, he made

[1] *Review of Reviews* for July 1897. 'The Rebuilding of the British Navy.'

[2] *Life of H. O. Arnold-Forster*, by his Widow.

his very characteristic maiden speech in the House of Commons we all thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Herbert Paul's good-humoured joke at his expense. The new Member for West Belfast, Mr. Paul assured the House, 'could, in the matter of infallibility, give his Holiness the Pope two stone and a licking.'

'I admire, honour, and esteem Mr. Arnold-Forster,' wrote to Stead a prominent member of the *Pall Mall* staff one day in that August of 1884, by way of explaining his absence from a week-end party at which the Editor's new associate was to be one of the guests, 'but I can't quite see myself enjoying a very easy time in his company.'

Stead, however, had known Arnold-Forster as a boy in W. E. Forster's Yorkshire home, was familiar with his sterling qualities, and recognized in him not merely a brother zealot but a man gifted with a faculty almost equal to his own for mastering all the details of a difficult problem. He welcomed his visitor warmly, therefore, and listened with intentness to all that he had to tell.

What he had to tell was merely an amplification of what he had already been saying in the *Nineteenth Century* and elsewhere but without affecting public opinion – his articles had somehow chanced not even to come before Stead's own notice. For his text he had been taking Mr. Gladstone's formula, given forth in 1878; the strength of England 'is not to be found in alliances with great military powers, but is to be found, henceforth, in the sufficiency and supremacy of her navy – a navy as powerful now as the navies of all Europe.'

Was the British navy *still* sufficient and supreme? That was the question which Arnold-Forster had set himself to answer, and he showed conclusively that Mr. Gladstone's estimate, too sanguine in 1878, was altogether wide of the mark in 1883. What with the enormous extension of our Colonial possessions and dependencies, and the gigantic increase in our ocean-borne commerce, to say nothing of the way in which foreign navies had been developed, the power of the British fleet had sunk relatively to an alarming degree. It could no longer be regarded as even approaching 'sufficiency and supremacy' and the country was in danger of losing 'not prestige merely,' but 'the very life-blood of its national existence.' 'To fall short of the absolute command of our ocean highways,' Arnold-Forster declared, 'means that we shall find ourselves face to face with war premiums of fifty per cent., the stoppage of our food supply, and, scarcely less important, the stoppage of our supplies of raw material. Panic, disorder, suffering, starvation among our overcrowded population will bring home to us with painful clearness the error we make in neglecting to maintain a sufficiently powerful and, above all, a sufficiently numerous Navy.'

That was in 1883. In 1884 the situation had become even more grave, and at last Arnold-Forster, despairing of his own efforts, came to Stead. Here is Stead's brief account of their interview and his story of what ensued:

> 'He set forth roughly an outline of the actual position of things which, of course, I had heard in a vague way before but which had never been brought forcibly home to me. I asked him to leave his papers and undertook to do what could be done.
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> 'I at once set about the fulfilment of my promise, and was soon overwhelmed with evidences that Mr. Forster had in no way exaggerated the danger of the position. It was evident that something must be done, and done at once, unless the Imperial position was to go by the board to Germany, who was just then entering the field of Colonial expansion. France was bitter and hot against us on account of the recently concluded Egyptian campaign. Little or nothing had been done to consolidate the Colonial Empire and it seemed difficult to exaggerate the peril to which we were exposed. We depended absolutely on the Navy, and the Navy itself was far below par. To realize this condition of Imperial peril, and to devote every energy which either personally, or journalistically I possessed to remedy it, was one of those duties which are instinctive, and for a month or more I lived and moved and had my being in what may be called the world of the Navy. I am fortunately dowered with a temperament which is almost absurdly optimistic. To see a great evil or a terrible peril clearly is a sure prophecy that the time has come to strike a great blow against the evil or to ward off the threatened danger. But notwithstanding this inheritance of buoyant confidence, I had some difficulty in making head against the all-pervading despair which possessed the Service.
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> 'I well remember my first interview with the then First Sea Lord, who received me kindly at the Admiralty, listened to me with a certain sympathetic compassion, and assured me that it was all of no use. There was indeed in the old Admiral's eye a certain feeling of incredulous wonder at the supreme audacity of the young journalist, who cheerily declared that if only he could secure his facts, he would compel any Government, even Mr. Gladstone's, to grant as many

millions as were necessary to restore the sea power of the Empire.

' "It cannot be done, sir," said Sir Cooper Key mildly but firmly. "It is no use. I have done my best. We have all done our best, and we have failed – utterly failed. Do you think that you could succeed where all the Sea Lords have failed, and move Mr. Gladstone?"

' "Yes," I said, "I think I shall if you will give me my facts."

' "But," said Sir Cooper Key bluntly, "I have already given them to Mr. Gladstone. We have all done everything short of resigning our offices to awake the Government to a sense of the deadly peril in which we stand. But it is no use. Mr. Gladstone thinks of nothing but Ireland and home affairs, and we can get nothing for the Navy: not a penny."

'One of Sir Cooper's colleagues, bluff old Beauchamp Seymour, who was created Lord Alcester after the bombardment of the Alexandrian forts, was equally despondent, but expressed his despair in much more blunt, sailor-like language. He had been speaking of the extent to which the Navy had been allowed to run down. I said to him, "But if these things are so, in case of war, say with France, what would happen?"

' "I tell you what would happen," said Lord Alcester grimly. "Within twenty-four hours of the declaration of war, Sir Cooper Key and I, and all the rest of us at the Admiralty, would be swinging by our necks from the lamp-posts in front of Whitehall, where we should be strung up, every man Jack of us, by the nation whom we had betrayed, and it would serve us right too," said he. "But what can we do? We protest, we make representations, we threaten to resign – I really do not know whether it is not our duty to resign outright, and declare that we refuse to be responsible for a Service which we know to be far below the safety level."

'These were two at the head, but when I went lower down in the Service and consulted the Admirals, Commanders of the Fleet, the Captains in active service, the younger men who were coming forward to the front, and who have since succeeded to chief command, I found everywhere the same story. Optimist or pessimist, they all knew the facts, and those facts were very bad indeed. I had an immense difficulty which all those connected with the Service will realize in getting officers to talk. I well remember one good captain, to whose patriotism and courage I was immensely indebted, who met me surreptitiously in byways and highways, and always concluded his conversation by pledging me to the most solemn secrecy as to the source of my information, ruthfully adding: "You have got enough in your wallet to break half the officers in Her Majesty's Service if you split."

'Needless to say, the confidence so freely given was sacredly preserved, nor has a single naval man, from the highest to the lowest, ever had occasion to regret that, in face of the summons of supreme patriotic duty, he disregarded the regulations of the Service so far as to communicate the facts vital to the welfare of the nation to a journalist whose only object was to arouse public opinion to the true state of the Navy.'

It was not until many years afterwards, when the 'good captain, in question had become the most famous of living Admirals, that the general public was informed as to his identity. 'It was when I was working up the "Truth About the Navy,"' Stead was to tell us later, 'that I made the acquaintance of Captain Fisher, then of the *Excellent*. He was recommended to me as the ablest officer ashore or afloat. . . . "Fisher," said an Admiral to me in those days, "is the one man we have who can be compared with Nelson."' [1]

'He came to me (like Nicodemus) and told me his plans,' we shall find Lord Fisher recording of Stead, in the warm-hearted panegyric which he wrote from Naples, after hearing of the loss of the *Titanic*, 'and got five millions sterling for the Navy which was then in a parlous state. (Ask Lord Esher how he did it – *he* knows).'

'As the weeks passed (Stead continues) and I gradually completed the survey of the British Navy and its coaling stations, which at that time were undefended – at the mercy of any enemy who cared to seize them – I felt perfectly certain that I had the case strong enough to break down even the impenetrable indifference of the Liberal Cabinet. Yet so obstinate had been the officials, and so long had prevailed the Liberal tradition that the first duty of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was to cut down the vote for the Navy, that I was almost in a minority of one when on passing the proofs of "The Truth About the Navy" for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, I declared that the victory was won before the first gun was fired.

'It must be admitted that the doubting Thomases had reason for their unbelief. In the May of 1884, Lord Northbrook, who was the First Lord of the Admiralty, made a public declaration from his place in the House of Lords as to the excellence of the Service for which he was constitutionally responsible. According to him, as

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[1] *Review of Reviews* for February 1910. 'Character Sketch of Lord Fisher.'

First Lord, the British Navy was in a position of super-eminent perfection. Those who wished to increase the estimates he derided as persons who had not been able to make up their minds as to what they wanted; and what with the division of opinion on their part, and with the excellence of the Navy on the other part, he did not hesitate to declare that if Parliament were to give him an extra vote of £2,000,000 sterling, he really would not know what to do with it – such was his confidence in the equipment of the fleet, and such his utter inability to discern any definite improvement that could be made in the Senior Service. That was a tolerably explicit declaration with which to confront the non-naval journalist whose good fortune it was to be the mouthpiece of all the ablest men in the Navy. They supplied me with my facts; I supplied them, as my share, with a buoyant faith in the possibility of rousing public opinion by the vigorous use of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

'When "The Truth About the Navy" appeared, the effect which it produced was immense. The newspaper Press, with few exceptions, took up the subject, for it is notable that in this last great Imperial work of the century neither the Commons nor the Lords rendered any service worth speaking of. The work was done from first to last by the Press. All that the Commons did was to vote the money which the newspapers had taught the public to demand. The articles appeared day after day until they were completed, and were then reprinted in a pamphlet called *The Truth about the Navy and the Coaling Stations*. I have never written anything in my life, not even "The Maiden Tribute," which produced so immediate and so overwhelming an effect on public opinion. No doubt the ground had been prepared by many other writers much abler and far better informed than myself, but, as a matter of fact, all these good men had failed, and admitted their failure, when it came to my turn to sound the alarm; and to my dying day I shall never cease to remember with exultant gratitude the success – success undimmed even by a single flaw – which followed that patriotic appeal. . . .

'Then Lord Northbrook came home from Egypt, and found himself confronted by his own Sea Lords, and by his own most confident advisers, while the whole Press of the country was urging that something should be done. The Duke of Devonshire – who then was Lord Hartington, and as Secretary for War was responsible for the ordnance – did his best to take advantage of the change effected in public opinion, and in this he was ably supported by Mr. Brett, who was then his private secretary, and whose invaluable services in that capacity, like those of all good private secretaries, are known only to his chief.

'The net result of it all was that within three months of the publication of "The Truth About the Navy" I had the supreme satisfaction of going down to the House of Lords to hear Lord Northbrook stand up in his place in the Senate, and from the very bench where, in the month of May, he had declared that the Navy was so perfect he would not know what to do with £2,000,000 if he got it as a gift, he declared that the state of the Navy was such that he must have at least three and a half million over and above the ordinary estimate of the year.

'The sum which he had urgently demanded in the Cabinet it was always understood was even larger, but the story went that it was cut down by Mr. Chamberlain, who was then in a state of the blindest ignorance concerning all naval matters. Mr. Gladstone, falling back upon his one-foot-in-the-grave argument, left the responsibility for the supplementary estimate to Lord Northbrook and Lord Hartington. Mr. Chamberlain led the opposition thereupon, and succeeded in mutilating the proposals which the advocates for a supreme Navy had with infinite difficulties forced upon the attention of the Cabinet. Fortunately, the mischief which Mr. Chamberlain had succeeded in effecting was overcome next year by the good service of the Emperor of Russia, who by his conduct in the Penjdeh incident succeeded in compelling the Liberal Administration to vote the money that was needed for the Navy, and then he allowed the incident to close.

'Ghastly, indeed, would have been the condition of England if, in 1885, the insensate folly of our Afghan officers had really precipitated us into war with Russia; but the episode did good service by compelling the Lords of the Admiralty to look war in the eyes, and realize how utterly unprepared they were in every respect.

'The change that was produced in public sentiment had no doubt been long in preparation, but the publication of "The Truth About the Navy" was the spark which fired the mine. It led a gallant officer in the Navy who is now in the very first rank, to pay me one of the most magnificent compliments I ever received in the whole of my career. Its very extravagance will deliver me from any accusation of desire to pretend to have deserved it. It was on the occasion of my first visit to Portsmouth Dockyard after "The Truth About the Navy" had appeared. I was presented to Admiral Hornby, who was then Commander-in-Chief. My host, who introduced me, said: "Admiral Hornby, I wish to present to you a man who has done more for the British Navy than any Englishman since the days of Lord Nelson!" However little a man may deserve such fantastic praise, the fact that such a compliment was paid with a full heart by an officer who realized how suddenly and completely the Service had passed from the darkness of despair to the joy of a new day, is a reminiscence upon which anyone might be pardoned for dwelling with patriotic pride.'

To borrow and amplify Lord Morley's phrase, 'no sane man, not biographer,' or not a naval expert or an economist, will want to spend many hours to-day over the study of the Parliamentary and journalistic discussion which Stead's articles called forth in 1884. I myself am neither an economist nor a naval expert, and in my capacity as biographer I have not thought it necessary to read more than the *dossier*[1] on the subject included among Stead's papers and the various accounts of the episode to be found in the official Lives of the politicians concerned, together with one or two such narratives as that contained in Sir John Brigg's *Naval Administrations*, *Naval Annual*, and *The Annual Register*. In any case, no amount of study would ever qualify me to discuss the subject with the assurance of Mr. Hirst. Mr. Hirst – and he stands of course for quite a considerable school of thought – treats Stead's action with the most contemptuous derision. He cannot even give him credit for sincerity of purpose. Like so many dogmatists, Mr. Hirst simply cannot conceive or admit that other people of any sense can honestly hold a conviction which to him seems foolish or unsound. In flinging himself into the struggle, Stead, Mr. Hirst remarks, was 'actuated probably by no worse motive than an irresistible desire to be the centre of a journalistic sensation.'[2]

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[1] A somewhat disappointing *dossier*, for one had hoped to find unpublished records of Stead's visits to Portsmouth and Plymouth, etc., etc., and noteworthy glimpses into the life he led during these weeks. The documents consist, however, of only a few unimportant letters and reports from Admirals and others – none from (the as yet obscure) Captain Fisher; and copies of 'The Truth About the Navy' in its *Pall Mall* 'Extra' form and of its sequel, issued in March 1885, 'The Navy of Old England: Is it Ready for War?' In addition to these a full report of the Parliamentary debate of December 2, 1884, and a dozen or so contemporary Press cuttings, etc., etc.

[2] 'No worse motive!' Of course Mr. Hirst cannot really mean what he says so airily. He and Stead would have been of accord in calling any such 'motive' criminal in the extreme.

As for the supposed possibility of war with France – one of the dangers against which Stead and Arnold-Forster, in common with many of the most sober-minded statesmen of the time, felt it was necessary to provide – Mr. Hirst treats that notion as simply preposterous.

Was it preposterous? It is difficult after a lapse of years to realize fully the conditions of any given moment. There is always the tendency among those who underrate an alleged danger of the past to argue that it was unreal, because they do not take into account what the development might well have been if no emergency precautions had been taken. But surely the international situation just then had its perilous aspects? Russia had not then begun the big drive eastward that later produced the war with Japan—the drive was then towards India from the Caspian base. The growing tension with France was more serious; besides minor causes of friction in Indo-China and the Pacific, there was the beginning of the struggle for Africa. The tension began with our occupation of Egypt following upon our intervention against Arabi in 1882. There was after this a steady growth among the French of the feeling that England had ousted them from Egypt and the Nile region, where their influence had so long been supreme, and was barring their way to Colonial expansion generally in Africa. This was to bring us several times in sight of war in the years between 1884 and the creation of the *entente*, which may be dated from the Anglo-French Declaration of April 1904, whereby France recognized our position in Egypt and secured in return a free hand in Morocco. Between 1884 and 1904 there was to be a near peril of war with the French on four separate occasions: over Siam; over Morocco; over the Niger territories; and over Fashoda, the most serious.

Looking back on the 1884 situation and the period that followed, it may surely be argued that it was all-important to make the Navy efficient. The measures urged by Stead and Arnold-Forster were practical and moderate. The expenditure proposed and adopted was a trifle compared with what would have been entailed by even a few weeks of war. If the Navy had been allowed to drift further into inefficiency would it not certainly have encouraged the aggressive party in France? The French naval and military literature of the time was full of discussions of action against England. Perhaps it was fortunate that the French, who exaggerated the importance of the new arm, neglected their first line in order to find money for filling all the the Channel ports with torpedo-craft destined for attack on British commerce. It was in such circumstances that Stead asked for and got – (1) Up-to-date battleships for the first line; (2) ships built in classes, not miscellaneous odds and ends; (3) fast cruisers for commerce protection; (4) a large flotilla of torpedo-boat destroyers.

A sound bit of insurance, was it not, against the risks that had to be faced? That is how it will appear, I imagine, to most people now in the light of what happened in the Great War. We have every reason to be grateful for our 'panic-built Navy.'

As Stead's standpoint, however, is so often misrepresented or misunderstood, I shall cite here in full the opening passage of a carefully-worded *apologia* which he himself wrote in 1901 at the instigation of the Nobel Committee. It was printed after his death in the *Review of Reviews*, June 1912.

'All my life long I have been a passionate advocate of arbitration, not as the ultimate solution of the difficulties, but as an ideal the advocacy of which would strengthen the sentiment in favour of the creation of the United States of Europe. The thought which has always dominated my mind has been that of establishing a High Court of Justice among the Nations, whose decrees would not merely be the recommendations of arbitrators, but would be enforced by the authority of the Court. My reading of history always pointed to the same conclusion – the successive stages by which mankind has emerged from that anarchic savagery when every man's hand was against his neighbour, and it was lawful to kill any stranger at sight, up to the present state of things when the right to make war is practically confined to half a dozen great Powers, who are all governed by the same law. It was not by the abandonment of force on the part of the advocates of law and of peace that anything could be done, but by the use of force in the defence of law and for the suppression of anarchy.

'This conception has always separated me from the majority of the propagandists of peace. I was as earnest as any of them to cast out militarism and dethrone the soldier, but my observations and reflections crystallized in one phrase – *you can only exorcise the soldier by the aid of the policeman.*[1] I was therefore ever anxious to aid in the development and strengthening of the principle of the European Concert which seemed to me the germ of the United States of Europe: and I always wrote and spoke in favour of the European Concert being used, not only for the purpose of consolidation but also for the purpose of action. For instance, when in 1876 the European Powers meeting in conference at Constantinople had unanimously decreed that autonomy should be given to the Bulgarians, I used every means at my disposal in order to urge upon the Powers not to allow their unanimous mandate to be set at defiance by the Turks. What I wished to see was the use of the Allied Forces of all the European Powers to compel the Turks by the use of their overwhelming force to obey the mandate of civilization as formulated by the nearest approach to an International Court that the world has yet seen. Unfortunately England, under Lord Beaconsfield, refused to support Russia in the coercion of Turkey for the liberation of Bulgaria, and the Russo-Turkish war was the result. Looking back upon the period when I was a young man of seven-and-twenty, I remember with gratitude the part which I was able to play in rousing the North of England, and in supporting Mr. Gladstone in his protests against the threatened war against Russia on behalf of the Turks. Both Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright repeatedly recognized the service which I rendered to the cause of peace in that campaign, and it was my proud privilege to be one of the three Englishmen who received the thanks of the first Bulgarian Assembly for the services which I had rendered to the cause of Bulgarian Independence.

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[1] I have italicized this line as summarizing Stead's view.

'All my life long I have been a thorough-going opponent of the Russophobist war spirit which has plunged Europe into the Crimean War, and which has repeatedly brought about war both in Europe and in Asia. By advocating constantly the principle of the European Concert, and demanding the enforcement, if need be, by the armies and navies of Europe, of the treaty-guaranteed rights of the unfortunate Christians of the East, I was always more or less at variance with the orthodox Peace Party, whose one idea was non-intervention and abstention from all European complications. I protested against this doctrine because I believed it to be an abdication of the responsibility which we owed to those for whose good government we had made ourselves responsible by the Treaty of Paris and the Treaty of Berlin; and whenever the chronic misgovernment of Turkey became acute in massacres and atrocities I never ceased to urge upon England and upon the other Powers to use the overwhelming strength which they possessed for the purpose of compelling the Turks to carry out their treaty obligations.

'I applied the same principle impartially to all disturbers of the peace in the East. I protested against the attitude taken by the Powers at the outbreak of the Græco-Turkish war, and maintained that it was their duty to have restrained Greece by force of arms, if need be, from precipitating war which terminated so disastrously, and I rejoiced exceedingly when, a little later, an international fleet and an international army were employed for the purpose of wresting Crete from the grasp of the Sultan. Always and everywhere I asserted that it was the imperative duty of the Powers who had undertaken the settlement of the Eastern Question to make their will effective by all the means at their disposal.

'The same order of ideas led me to be for several years one of the foremost, if not the foremost, advocate of what I may call the Imperialism of Responsibility, as opposed to the Jingoism, which is the Imperialism of pride and avarice, on the one hand, and to Little Englandism, which seemed to me to be almost as selfish and unworthy a policy, on the other. When in my teens I shrank from any extension of English authority over the dark-skinned races of the world, but the experience of Fiji convinced me that it would be an abdication of duty for England to refuse to use her Imperial power for maintaining peace and putting down piracy and the slave-trade among the dark-skinned races of the world. It seemed to me that the European races have no right to breed filibusters and adventurers, to permit them freely to go to Africa and Asia, armed with the weapons and the poisons of modern civilization and to leave them free to prey upon the native races. In Fiji the policy of abstention was carried to its extreme logical limit. The natives implored England to send them a Governor in order to protect them from the white men who were kidnapping them into slavery. Mr. Gladstone refused; but a year or two later the horrible results which followed from this refusal of the plea of the natives compelled him reluctantly to undertake the responsibility of governing the islands.

'It was then I summed up my conclusion in the phrase, "It is necessary to follow up the filibuster by the policeman." I became enamoured of the idea that the British Imperial power was the instrument for maintaining peace among races which would otherwise have been cursed by internecine warfare, and of putting down the horrors of slavery and of other barbarous works in vast regions. The maintenance of the Roman peace throughout the 300 millions of India by an army which was much fewer in numbers than the force maintained in a small European country seemed to me an end for which it was worth while to make many sacrifices. From the Himalayas to Ceylon, among one-fifth of the population of this planet, no cannon could be fired except by permission of the supreme Government. Brigandage was suppressed: civil war disappeared, and we maintained absolute peace in that vast country by what was little better than an armed police force. I became an impassioned Imperialist, but my Imperialism was always an Imperialism of Responsibility, or, as I phrased it nearly thirty years ago, an Imperialism plus common sense and the Ten Commandments.

'Against Jingoism in every shape and form I always waged unceasing war. Empire was to me not a source of pride, excepting so far as it was the emblem of duty done, of burdens borne for the benefit of humanity.

'I applied the same principle with absolute impartiality to other countries. I claimed nothing for England that I did not claim with equal vehemence for Russia, whose progress through Central Asia seemed to me a great gain for civilization and a benefit for humanity. The suppression of the slave-trade in the Khanates of Turkestan, and the establishment of law and order in the midst of marauding tribes, seemed to me a desirable end in the interest of peace; and although I deplored the incidental bloodshed of a brief campaign I regarded that as a small price to pay for the great advantages which could not otherwise have been obtained.'

It was obvious, Stead went on to point out, that his conception of the civilizing sovereignty of a great Power, as well as of the importance of strengthening the authority of the European Concert, was bound to bring him into constant conflict with the apostles of peace at any price. War to Stead was as horrible as it was to Cobden, but just as Cobden, in his letter to Lord John Russell, in 1860, could declare that he 'would, if necessary, spend 100 millions sterling to maintain an irresistible superiority over France,' so Stead, the fervent advocate of arbitration, had to fight for British naval efficiency in 1884. We shall find him fighting again in the same spirit presently – and still with Fisher beside him – for 'Two Keels to One.'

CHAPTER 8

'THE MAIDEN TRIBUTE OF MODERN BABYLON'

STEAD'S REVELATIONS IN THE *PALL MALL GAZETTE*. HIS TRIALS AT BOW STREET AND THE OLD BAILEY AND SENTENCE TO THREE MONTHS' IMPRISONMENT

July–November 1885

'I CANNOT find words to say how I honour and reverence you for what you have done for the weakest and most helpless among women. I always felt that by some legal quibble you might be tripped up, as it were; but this is as nothing; your work will stand. . . . I really envy you as much as I admire and honour you; very few people, even among heroes and martyrs, have had the happiness of seeing their faithful work so immediately crowned with good results.

'Everything I have written sounds so cold compared to what I feel; but if gratitude and honour from myself and many hundreds and thousands of your countrymen can help you at this stress, I want you to have that help.'

From a letter to W. T. Stead, written November 9, 1885, the day on which he was sentenced to imprisonment, by Mrs. Millicent Garrett Fawcett.

I

THE REVELATIONS

The exposure of criminal vice begun in the *Pall Mall Gazette* for July 6, 1885, under the title 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,' shocked most people in England out of their senses, but not the people who were best informed on the subject and who had it nearest at heart. The words cited above from Mrs. Fawcett's letter express eloquently and convincingly the profound emotion of thankfulness with which Stead's action was regarded by an immense multitude of English women and English men. The subject is a horrible one, but it forms an essential part of Stead's biography and calls for full treatment in these pages. Stead himself, as we shall see, felt always that this was the outstanding episode in his career – his best title to fame. It was a source of real and enduring happiness to him to know that the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, which, as the result of his efforts, was carried through Parliament in 1885, could be justly spoken of as Stead's Act.

Two great and allied evils had long been calling for the introduction of this measure – first, the prevalence of juvenile prostitution; and second, what is still known as the White Slave Trade, the exportation of girls to foreign parts for immoral purposes. A Commission of the House of Lords, appointed in 1881 on the motion of Lord Dalhousie, who was then Under Secretary of the Home Office, had reported upon this question. This report was of an appalling character – as 'sensational' in its way as any of the articles subsequently printed in the *Pall Mall*; as Lord Shaftesbury had said in a speech in the House of Lords at the time: 'Nothing more cruel, appalling, or detestable could be found in the history of crime all over the world.' But Parliamentary reports are apt to be left unread or ignored, and although Gladstone's Ministry – Sir William Harcourt being then Home Secretary – recognized the urgency of the problem and introduced a Bill giving effect to the recommendation of the Committee, there was no real motive power behind it. It was strongly opposed by a small group of members, of whom a few were notoriously evil-livers, while the rest regarded themselves probably as sensible men of the world, passionately intolerant of views which seemed to them foolish and fanatical. Neither of the two great political Parties saw any means of making capital out of the Bill and its few ardent supporters – Mr. (afterwards Sir) James Stansfeld conspicuous among them – carried little weight. The result was that session after session it was introduced in due course and eventually allowed to be dropped. It had been introduced once again in the spring of 1885 before Mr. Gladstone's Government lost power. When Lord Salisbury became Prime Minister, the Bill's supporters discovered that it was again to be sacrificed.

At this juncture Mr. Benjamin Scott, Chamberlain of the City of London, an old man of seventy-five, called on Stead at the *Pall Mall Gazette* office and described to him how, with Mrs. Josephine Butler, wife of a Canon of Winchester Cathedral, and very famous for her noble work among outcast women, he had been labouring in vain for years past in favour of some such measure as the Bill in question. 'The Bill is practically lost,' he exclaimed. 'You are the only man in the country who can save it.'

Mrs. Butler called next and added her entreaties; and Stead who, although keenly interested in the tragic underside of life, had at that time but scanty personal knowledge of the matter, promised to make inquiries and see what could be done. He discovered that the law of England as it then stood recognized that a girl one day over thirteen years of age was legally a woman, and was fully competent to consent to her own undoing; and, moreover, that very young children could not give evidence as to the men who had ruined them unless they could satisfy the judge and jury that they understood the nature of an oath. He also obtained evidence from a former Head of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard, Mr. (afterwards Sir Charles) Howard Vincent, as to the existence of men and women well known to the police who made a business of 'procuring' and corrupting young girls. 'He told me,' Stead records, 'that as soon as the child was over thirteen years of age she could be inveigled into a house of ill-fame and there could be violated without any possible hope of redress, because if she had consented to go into the house she was held to have consented to her own ruin, although she might at that time be, and probably was, absolutely ignorant of what vice meant.'

Stead asked Howard Vincent whether the innocent victims did not cry out and scream! – was not the thought of their screams enough to 'raise hell!' 'It doesn't even raise the neighbours,' Howard Vincent replied.

'Then *I* will raise hell!' declared Stead.

Stead tells us how his first proceeding was to visit the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Manning, and Dr. Temple, the Bishop of London, and to try to convince all three that the only way to get the Criminal Law Amendment Bill passed was by instituting an investigation into the condition of London vice, by proving beyond dispute the continued existence of the evils described in the Lords' Committee Report, and by publishing in the *Pall Mall Gazette* a narrative such as would compel the most reluctant Government to suspend all other business until the Bill became law. He himself, in order to demonstrate that a vicious man could have a girl over thirteen procured for him for vicious purposes, would personate such a man, playing the part in every detail short of actually consummating the crime he would be pretending to wish to commit.

Archbishop Benson, while sympathizing strongly with Stead's motives, shuddered at the plan.[1] Cardinal Manning and Dr. Temple gave it their approval, convinced that it was an occasion for extreme measures.

Stead next communicated with the Salvation Army, with which he had been for years in close touch, General Booth and his wife, and their eldest son, Mr. Bramwell Booth, the present General, being close personal friends of his, and through their agency he made the acquaintance of a woman who had formerly kept a brothel but who had repented of her ways and had become a Salvationist. This woman, Rebecca Jarrett, was now asked to act as Stead's accomplice and, pretending to have resumed her old habits, to purchase for him, for £5, a girl just over thirteen, ostensibly for vicious purposes. She dreaded the task, but Mrs. Butler, to whom she had owed her own redemption, united her entreaties to Stead's, and at last she consented. She went to a Mrs. Armstrong, the mother of a child called Eliza who had just turned thirteen, and proposed the transaction to her. At first Mrs. Armstrong refused angrily, but the next day she changed her mind and on receiving £3 (there was to be a further payment later) she allowed her daughter to go with Jarrett.

Eliza was brought to Stead and he was free to do with her as he pleased. In pursuance of his project, he now, in his assumed rôle of a vicious man, took her to a house of ill-fame, where she was examined by a woman, Madame Mourez, herself a procuress and also a midwife, and certified by her to be a virgin. She then went to bed, and was left alone for half-an-hour. Stead presently entered the room in which she was lying asleep and she woke up with the startled cry, 'There is a man in the room.' Stead withdrew at once and a Salvation Army officer, a woman, who had accompanied him, proceeded to take Eliza off to a nursing home, where she was again examined, this time by a well-known physician, Dr. Heywood Smith, who certified that she had suffered no injury of any kind. After spending the night at the Nursing Home she was taken next morning to Paris, where the Salvation Army took care of her.

This was the principal incident of Stead's amazing enterprise. Substituting another name for that of Eliza Armstrong, he now gave a detailed record of it in the course of the series of four articles which, with their sensational heading, were to make the *Pall Mall Gazette* famous that week, and for long afterwards, throughout the entire world.

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[1] On July 8 the Archbishop, in reply to a letter from Stead, wrote *apropos* of the *P.M.G.* revelations: 'Opinions are more divided than on anything I have ever known. You have sent a sword on earth. I only trust it will cut the right knots.'

'Even at this day,' Stead wrote in November 1910,[1] 'I stand amazed at the audacity with which I carried the thing through. . . . The Home Secretary implored me to stop publishing the articles. I told him I would stop them the moment he promised me he would carry the Bill through. He declined to give any such pledge. I then told him I would go on with the publication until the roused indignation of the public compelled the Ministry to do their duty.[2]

'I was pretty stirred up myself at that time and, thanks to the splendid response of the women of the country, largely aided by leaders of religious thought, I achieved my end. The Criminal Law Amendment Act was swept in triumph through both Houses of Parliament by Ministers who had assured me positively that it was a physical and political impossibility to do any such thing. The Act of Parliament still stands as the Charter of the girlhood of the country. It raised the age of consent from thirteen to sixteen, it admitted the evidence of children even if they were not able to satisfy the judge and jury that they understood the nature of an oath, and it increased the pains and penalties inflicted upon all those who ruined girls, whether by abducting them abroad or corrupting them at home.'

II

THOSE FIVE JULY ISSUES OF THE *PALL MALL*

The five issues of the *Pall Mall* containing the series of four articles have little in their outward appearance to arrest attention, apart from the faint pink colour of the paper on which one of them was printed – the journal's own stock had run short and in the emergency some paper intended for the *Globe* had been secured.

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[1] *Why I Went to Prison.* Stead's Publishing House, Bank Buildings, Kingsway. Reprinted as a pamphlet in April 1912, immediately after his death, with a moving appeal from Mrs. Fawcett on behalf of the new Criminal Law Amendment Bill then before Parliament.

[2] From a letter to Stead written by Archbishop Benson on August 1, it appears that the outcome of the agitation was no longer in doubt at that date. The Archbishop has alluded to the raising of the age and the passing of the Bill: 'This will now be done. It is settled,' he writes.

The 'leader' on the Monday, under the heading 'We Bid You Be of Good Hope,' begins boldly:

> 'The report of our Secret Commission will be read to-day with a shuddering horror that will thrill throughout the world. After this awful picture of the crimes at present committed, as it were under the very ægis of the law, has been fully unfolded before the eyes of the public, we need not doubt that the House of Commons will find time to raise the age during which English girls are protected from inexpiable wrong. The evidence which we shall publish this week leaves no room for doubt – first as to the reality of the crimes against which the Amendment Bill is directed, and, secondly, as to the efficacy of the protection extended by raising the age of consent. When the report is published, the case for the Bill will be complete and we do not believe that Members on the eve of a General Election will refuse to consider the Bill protecting the daughters of the poor, which even the House of Lords has in three consecutive years declared to be imperatively necessary.'

The opening article of the series extends from the bottom of page 1 to the bottom of page 6, and concludes with the story of Eliza Armstrong, called here 'Lily,' without any surname. Then follows 'This Evening's News' and the usual contents of the paper.

The second article, in the Tuesday's issue, is of similar length. In the 'Occasional Notes' Stead observes with satisfaction that Mr. Cavendish Bentinck, M.P., one of the most active opponents of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill in the House of Commons, has given notice to ask the Home Secretary 'Whether his attention has been directed to certain publications relating to objectionable subjects which have been printed and circulated throughout the metropolis by the proprietors of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and whether any means exist of subjecting the author and publishers of these objectionable publications to criminal proceedings.'

Wednesday's *Pall Mall* records the Home Secretary's reply. He was advised, he said, that the publication of obscene matter could be prosecuted by indictment in the usual way and that the offence was punishable by fine and imprisonment, according to the direction of the court; but it was for a jury to define what was an obscene publication. In his leading article Stead notes the intense excitement already produced by his articles. The *Pall Mall Gazette* has been banished from W. H. Smith & Son's railway bookstalls and its editor is in receipt of anonymous letters of abuse and already there are rumours of his arrest; but ministers of religion, of every denomination, are coming to his support; Spurgeon conspicuous among them.

The third long article begins with a challenge to the Government to subject the paper's disclosures to a judicial investigation.

By Thursday Stead is able to cite commendations from Bishops, Peers, and Members of Parliament; and we read that the Lord Mayor of London, in trying the case of eleven newsboys charged with causing an obstruction and selling copies of a paper containing indecent literature – the *Pall Mall Gazette* – has declared his opinion that the editor of the paper 'is influenced by high and honourable views in the course he has taken.'

Friday finds Stead triumphant. The Criminal Law Amendment Bill has been rushed through the second reading in the House of Commons. The leading religious and medical weekly newspapers have come out strongly on his side. An influential Committee, of which Cardinal Manning is to be a member, will investigate into the truth of what the *Pall Mall* has published. And in addition to other noteworthy tributes from men of mark and influence,[1] he is able to print the following warm-hearted tribute from the brave old man at whose instigation he entered upon the crusade:

'Mr. Benjamin Scott, City Chamberlain and chairman of the Committee for the Suppression of Traffic in Girls, writes: "I congratulate you with all my heart on the fearlessness and effect of your assault on the hideous monster which is preying upon our helpless little ones. It is beside the mark to criticize too severely the delicacy of the terms which you have used – one cannot handle pitch without being defiled; nor is it necessary to discuss beforehand what a jury of your countrymen might say if anyone were indiscreet enough to require legal proof of your assertions. To myself, and those ladies and gentlemen who have toiled with me for the last five years in order to expose and suppress the abomination which shelters itself under the shameful inefficiency of our laws, the relief is unspeakable.

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[1] In a letter to a Nonconformist clergyman the Bishop of Truro made use of a noteworthy phrase. He disliked and disapproved of Stead's methods, but, he said: 'It may be that when we review the history of the past year from the land beyond the veil we shall see that the desperate condition of English morality required this desperate remedy.'

We have been, to say nothing of the labour, compelled to carry a burthen of consciousness which rendered our waking hours oppressive, and even haunted our dreams. We had not the ability or the opportunity which you possess, and perhaps we may have lacked, to some extent, the courage to drag, as you have done, the abomination into the light of day; and so the conspiracy of a shameful secrecy and silence withstood our earnest but insufficient labour. You speak of chivalry being dead and Christianity effete. The spirit of both survives in you to-day. Go on, sir, you may have to take blows like every true knight, but you know well how to return them; you may have to suffer obloquy, and perhaps outrage, as all pioneer reformers have done, until the selfish, the unreflecting, and the ignorant 'in silent awe return to glean up the martyr's ashes into history's golden urn.' You have spoken a word which cannot be unsaid. It may offend the fastidious, it will alarm the criminal, but it will rally around you thousands of good and brave men and women. You have already won two battles – a unanimous resolution of the Upper House of Convocation, and the second reading, amidst cheers, in the House of Commons of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill. Your action reminds me of the first outspoken and fearless words of Lloyd Garrison, on whose head a price of 5,000 dollars had been set by the State of Georgia for daring to expose the barbarities of slavery: 'I am aware that many object to the severity of my language, but is there no cause for such severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. I am in earnest! I will not equivocate, I will not excuse, I will not retract a single word, and I will be heard!' " '

III

THE ENSUING EXCITEMENT

There is no exaggeration in the statement that Stead's articles made the *Pall Mall Gazette* famous 'throughout the entire world.' They were quoted from and commented on in the newspapers of every nation, from France and Germany to China and Peru, and copies of those issues found their way to every corner of the British Empire. Everywhere they were read – everywhere in different moods and with different feelings: pruriently or frivolously by those who knew no better; by fools and Pharisees, and, indeed, the average man and woman, merely with horrified disapproval of Stead's indecency; but by countless thousands with heartfelt gratitude to him, and with tears of shame and grief over the hideous and callous cruelties which he exposed.

Nor is it possible to exaggerate the sensation they produced in England and above all in London. As one of Stead's supporters declared bitterly, and only too truly, afterwards, the editors of the daily London papers united in one common howl of execration, 'not against atrocious crime, but against the exposure of it.' The majority of journalists, no doubt, like the majority of other people, were so much shocked and scandalized by Stead's methods that they could not take adequately to heart the horrors which he had revealed; among the minority who, influenced by the dozen or so great names enlisted on Stead's side, came to realize not merely his single-mindedness and courage, but his triumphant success, there were few indeed who gave him any kind of support.[1]

A couple of extracts will serve to illustrate the general attitude of the London Press:

> 'The evil will be spread, till there will be scarcely a boy or girl in England whose ignorance will not be displaced by forbidden knowledge, or whose innocence will not be tainted by the disgusting pabulum with which they have been so plentifully supplied. A plague worse than any Egyptian plague has visited the homes of England.'

This is from an issue of the *Weekly Times* (a journal owned by a Radical M.P., a famous philanthropist) which contained no less than nine columns of police court news, rapes, outrages, murders, suicides, and every 'serious charge' of a sexual nature that had been made in England *during that very week.*

Here is the second, from a journal which was in nowise moved by the actual crimes unmasked:

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[1] When Stead and his associates were put on trial at Bow Street and the Old Bailey for their action regarding Eliza Armstrong, the London newspapers, of course, reported the case fully in loathsome detail. It is to be noted, moreover, that two of the papers which were most severe upon the 'Maiden Tribute' campaign, distinguished themselves later by the quite exceptional amount of space they devoted to the Colin Campbell divorce suit, with all its ugliness; one of them devoting no less than five columns to it in a single issue, and curtailing its usual long list of church services on the occasion.

'We venture to say that no other capital in Europe would tolerate for an hour the spectacle presented in the main thoroughfares of London at the present moment, of men, women and children offering to men, women and children copies of a newspaper containing the most offensive, highly coloured, and disgusting details concerning the vicious ways of a small section of the population. . . . We protest against the streets being turned into a market for literature which appeals to the lascivious curiosity of every casual passer-by and excites the latent pruriency of a half-educated crowd.'

The Conservative dailies and Liberal dailies alike concentrated on this surface aspect of the matter, shutting their eyes to the tremendous issues involved. Their tone called forth a few weeks later a crushing letter to the *Church Times* from Canon Horsley, then chaplain at Clerkenwell Prison. He wrote it, he explained, at the request of several friends, including Canon Scott Holland.

After an allusion to 'the miserable leading of nearly the whole of the London Press,' Canon Horsley proceeded:

'Nine years of such work as I have had among the abandoned of all classes, makes me able to speak with a knowledge of the subject that few can claim, and I would point out that –

'I am certain, of personal knowledge, that whatever may be said as to Mr. Stead's methods of action or manner of writing (which I have never approved), his motives were entirely righteous, and the legislative effect of his action absolutely needed and beneficial. . . .

'That the revelations caused no surprise or doubt in the mind of any worker experienced in prison or penitentiary work. They simply said, "This is what we have had to know; this is what we have tried in vain to get people to realize; this is largely due to the miserable state of the law which a Parliament, which cares only for mere politics, in spite of our evidence and indignant protests, has repeatedly omitted and even refused to amend."

'That the revelations by no means covered the whole phenomena of vice in London. Mr. Stead consulted me before I knew who he was, and repeatedly put aside lines of evidence as not bearing on the sole point he attacked – i.e. that vice which was also crime. . . .

'Let me add a word of warning to some. The recent *exposé* has been *in rem.* If the London Press continues its policy and its tone, there must be another – and it will be *in personam*; and then a storm will be aroused compared with which the recent wrath will seem but a passing frown.'

The provincial papers, on the whole, showed far more sympathy with Stead's efforts and aims. To a London correspondent of one of them, the *North Eastern News*,we owe a singularly interesting account of how Stead bore himself in the midst of the turmoil. In the issue of the journal for July 17 he writes:

'The editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* is somewhat under the average height. He has a reddish beard, and his light-blue eyes give a singularly frank and youthful appearance to a face which would otherwise have an old and careworn look. His manner corresponds with his expression; it is frank and simple almost to childlikeness. He begins to talk about the subject uppermost in his mind almost before he has got well inside the room, and anyone who listens to him is at once convinced that he is saying exactly what he thinks. In language he is equally unconventional. He throws himself into a chair or on a bench with a truly American disregard of the angles of society postures, and he uses phrases which, both in their character and in their vigour, smack of the Far West. Like that of most journalists, his nervous system has evidently been sacrificed to the exigencies of his occupation, for he finds it impossible to talk without a pencil or a bit of paper in his hands, or to sit for much more than a minute in one place. . . . But Mr. Stead's excitement is physical only, and a week ago, while Northumberland Street was blocked by an angry mob, and the sound of breaking windows began to be heard below, and while the police authorities took no notice of repeated requests for assistance and protection, he lay back in his editorial arm-chair and chatted calmly about the prospects of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill becoming law as if there were no such person as Mr. Cavendish Bentinck in existence, and as if there were not the slightest possibility that the sturdy Inspector of Police from Bow Street, whom I met at the door, had an uncomfortable missive in his pocket. . . . The most striking characteristic of the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* is his transparent sincerity. He may, of course, have been mistaken in many things. He may even have been hoaxed by some of the many disreputable persons with whom this investigation has brought him into contact, though he declares that the first week of his investigation was chiefly occupied in tracking down hoaxes, but any suspicion of his insincerity or of exaggeration with a view to results in the counting-house, will probably only be entertained by those who have never met him and listened to his careless laughter, or looked into his blue eyes.'

After explaining how Stead came to embark on the crusade, the writer proceeds:

'Early on the eventful Monday morning on which the first of the articles was to appear I had my first interview with Mr. Stead. While I was looking over the rough proofs of the first chapter he walked straight into the room where I was waiting, laid himself down on a bench usually sacred to the use of the office boy, and plunged into the subject at once. "I recognize fully all the harm we shall do," he said, in answer to my question. "I have thought of it in every possible light for weeks; but I am certain that the good will be immeasurably greater, and first of all – mark my words – the Bill will pass." He paused a moment, and then added quietly, "The Bill will pass; but, after what we have gone through, not one of us will ever be the same man again." He then spoke somewhat in detail of the exploits and adventures of what he has called the "Secret Commission." With one exception, they were all members of the staff of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. For a month they were almost wholly occupied with this work in all parts of London, and in private communication with everybody, moral and immoral, who was supposed to be able to throw any light on the subject. The expense of the undertaking was over £300, some of which was spent in very curious ways. As the editor pointed out to me the most striking passages in the proof before us on the table, and supplemented them with details even more horrible than any that were mentioned, and many of the names of the persons referred to, I could not help putting a question to him about his certainty that all these things, so wholly incredible at first sight, were true. "I give you my personal word," he said, impressively, "that I know the absolute accuracy of everything that is published here, and I will go further and assure you that the case is in reality much understated."

'The second time I saw Mr. Stead was under circumstances which have never been equalled in London since the office of *Bell's Life* was besieged for copies of the paper after the ever-famous prize-fight between Sayers and Heenan. Northumberland Street was blocked by a dense crowd of men and boys, fighting promiscuously in their eagerness to get near enough to the office to buy the paper, and the faces of the group round each door were positively purple from the pressure in which they had been standing. Not a single policeman was nearer than Charing Cross. On gaining admittance, after great difficulty, I discovered that the paper had been printed for two hours, and great heaps of copies were lying ready for distribution; but it was impossible to take any steps to sell them to the vendors, because if the crowd had once been admitted, in all probability the premises would have been looted from top to bottom. Immediately inside the door stood the representative of one of the great London dailies, exhausting all the arts of journalistic diplomacy in an unavailing attempt to secure audience of some responsible person. The exhibition of his Russia leather credentials and the shillings he placed in the hands of the office boys were equally ineffective, and he at last retired a sadder but not a wiser man. On the stairs I met the editor, and told him that rumour from the Law Courts had just reached me of an injunction which had been obtained to stop the issue of the paper, and that it was to be prosecuted forthwith. "Bosh," said he with a smile. "Prosecute me? I wish with all my heart they would, and they know I do. Almost all my staff is invalided from hard work, and a prison is really the only place where I shall be able to get any rest for a long time. But I shall not be prosecuted." "Why not?" "Because people only want to prosecute me for having given publicity to these facts, but if they do so there will be at once a hundred times more publicity, and all the names implicated will come out besides." A few hours before Mr. Stead had had a private interview with the Home Secretary with regard to Mr. Cavendish Bentinck's question in the House of Commons. "What you should do," said the editor to the statesman, "is to say in the House that the *Pall Mall Gazette* has covered itself with everlasting glory by this most courageous attempt to extirpate a most disgraceful evil." "Of course I cannot say that," replied the Home Secretary. "Then," retorted Mr. Stead, "I wish you would say that the *Pall Mall Gazette* has committed an abominable outrage on public morals, and that you have instructed the law officers of the Crown to prosecute me at once." '

Stead's decriers, both then and afterwards, liked to contend that he published the revelations in order to 'boom' the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

This stupid insinuation is to be found unfortunately even in that well-known volume, *Fleet Street and Downing Street*, by the late Mr. Kennedy Jones, whose familiarity with journalistic matters ought to have saved him from such an error. The following passage helps to demonstrate how little basis there was for such a theory:

> 'Now that the Government, as Mr. Stead anticipated, have decided not to take proceedings against him or the proprietor, it may be said, for the information of those who looked upon these exposures as a catchpenny enterprise without risk to anybody concerned, that Mr. Stead was informed by the lawyers of the *Pall Mall Gazette* – a well-known firm of the highest authority in criminal matters – that if he were prosecuted no power on earth could save him from conviction. On the other hand, the Home Secretary declined the most pressing requests to mark all the passages which seemed to him indecent and could be induced to specify only two or three of the kind. This, the editor naturally assumed, was a straw showing the opinion of the law officers of the Crown. Up to the present the *Pall Mall Gazette* is out of pocket by reason of these investigations, and any gain which may ultimately accrue will be applied to the work of rescue and prevention. Though everybody attacked the editor, he and those acting with him, felt that, having possession of the facts, it was due to themselves and to the public that they should be made known whatever the consequences.
>
> 'Towards the end of the week a sudden and remarkable change was evident in the behaviour of the police. Whereas on Monday and Tuesday no attention had been paid at headquarters to repeated requests for assistance and protection, on Thursday and Friday an entirely unnecessary force surrounded the whole building, and refused admittance to everybody, even to the editor's private secretary, much to the amusement of that courteous gentleman. There may have been some reason known to the authorities at Scotland Yard for this imposing demonstration, but none was visible to the outside public.
>
> 'On Tuesday the two double Marinoni presses ran at full speed from noon till eight o'clock, then the supply of paper ran out. Next morning no paper could be found in London but some which was destined for the *Globe*, and therefore the next day's issue of the *Pall Mall Gazette* was bought by unsuspecting Tories for "the oldest

afternoon paper in London." On Wednesday night a fresh supply was brought up from Durham in a van attached to the mail train. "High up in six figures" was the comprehensive reply of the manager when asked the size of the editions.

'With regard to the actual authorship of the narrative which has appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, it may be stated that on Thursday night at eight o'clock not a word was written of what was to appear on the following day, and that Mr. Stead dictated to three shorthand clerks, all night long, the concluding chapter of the revelations. Of course, he had a large supply of notes and references and reports, but the whole phraseology was due, at least on this occasion, to one person only.[1]

'On Friday morning, among a thousand letters received, there was only one protesting against the revelations. The most amusing of them all has not yet been published. It was from a well-meaning gentleman of pugilistic tastes in the East End, who, having heard that an attack was meditated upon some of the houses of refuge and possibly upon the offices of the *Pall Mall Gazette* itself, volunteered to come with a party of friends to protect them. "I am considered a pretty good heavy-weight," he wrote, and added the familiar titles of half a dozen boxers, professional and amateur, who would accompany him. The standing of each one in the sparring world was indicated by a careful phrase, and last of all came "my brother William, an excellent middle-weight."'

IV

LETTERS OF PRAISE AND BLAME

Letters of both praise and blame were soon to pour in unceasingly from all quarters. Among well-wishers and supporters, in addition to Cardinal Manning and the other members of the Committee of Inquiry, and actual associates like Mrs. Josephine Butler and Mr. Benjamin Scott, the following were conspicuous:

Lord Shaftesbury.
Lord Dalhousie.
Lord Mount-Temple.
Dr. Clifford.
Canon Wilberforce.
Mr. Spurgeon.

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[1] Mr. E. H. Stout writes: 'I remember that, as he dictated this last section, he sat with wet towels round his head. I think I was on duty for 48 hours at a stretch myself at that period.'

Mr. Newman Hall.
Mr. Hugh Price Hughes.
Mrs. Booth.
Mrs. Fawcett.
Mrs. Ormiston Chant.
Miss Charlotte Mason.
Mr. Walter L. B. M'Laren.
Rev. A. W. Hutton.
Miss Ellice Hopkins.
The Rev. Henry Scott Holland.
Mr. Percy Bunting, editor of the *Contemporary Review.*
Mr. Ernest Hart, editor of the *British Medical Journal.*
Mr. Auberon Herbert.
Mr. F. W. Crossley (of Manchester).
Prof. Silvanus P. Thompson.
Mr. F. Charrington, of the Tower Hamlets Mission.
Rev. Malcolm McColl.
Rev. Hugh B. Chapman.
Mr. George Bernard Shaw.
Mr. Aylmer Maude.

Among the earliest letters to arrive was one from General Booth, written from the Salvation Army Headquarters in Queen Victoria Street, and dated July 9. The General evidently gave much thought to its phrasing, for it contains a number of erasures and emendations. It is in his own handwriting. I give it in full:

'101, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, E.C.
July 9, '85.

'MY DEAR STEAD,—

'Go on! Every blow tells. It is curious to note the effect of the "revelations." Multitudes are filled with horror and while distressed at the dire necessity which compels publicity cry out with agonizing entreaty for the Bill. Others refuse to look at the black iniquity on the plea that a mistake has been made in the publication. Others try to find comfort in the hope that there is some exaggeration in the facts. Alas, alas, we who are face to face with the evil are only too well able to verify them. It is a strong dose certainly, but it is a horrible disease.

'Anyhow we shall get the loathsome malady looked at now and a stronger dose still administered, with a view to a remedy. But when you have all done your level best with public opinion and legal enactments if you stop then, the tide will rise again and burst your barriers and unless there is something more sweep the very nation away as it has swept the mighty nations of the past.

'By all means get the Bill and then come and join us in a mighty effort to rescue men from the reign of those devilish passions which are the root of all this evil.

Yours in the war with all iniquity,
(*Signed*) WILLIAM BOOTH.'

Canon Malcolm MacColl – an old ally – wrote the moment he read the first article. In the case of the 'Bulgarian Atrocities,' he said, he had taken no action until he had mastered the whole subject for himself, but in this matter he must take part at once. He would come immediately to Stead for further information. If but a tithe of what was recorded in the *Pall Mall* were true, it would 'demand an agitation as fierce as that against the Bulgarian horrors.'

Mr. Auberon Herbert, that latter-day Don Quixote, adds to his expressions of sympathy a practical suggestion worthy of Sancho Panza. His country house is empty and at Stead's disposal, he declares: 'If you would use it for the next ten days – taking all your party there – it would be a real pleasure to me. *Lots of fresh milk – eggs – bacon.* Do, *do* it – and give us both real pleasure.'

He repeats his advice next day, after a visit to the *P.M.G.* office. 'The whole street reeks with unclean humanity,' he writes. '*Do get away* into the country!'

Mr. Hugh B. Chapman, then Vicar of St. Luke's, Camberwell, was also swift to declare himself on Stead's side. He is tempted, he declares, to resign his orders and stand for Parliament and never rest until 'the passing of this Bill, which has more to do with our national well-being than any other issue before the House.'

There is an equally characteristic letter from Mr. George Bernard Shaw, scornful over W. H. Smith & Son's boycotting of 'the first newspaper which ever inspired respectable men with enthusiasm.' 'If a practical protest is ever needed,' he continues, 'I am quite willing to take as many quires of the paper as I can carry and sell them (for a penny) in any thoroughfare in London. I believe I can find both ladies and gentlemen ready to do the same.'

Among all the communications which reached him, we may be sure that none afforded Stead greater happiness than this touching letter from one of his two sisters, dated from Redcar :

'*Aug.* '85.

'DEAREST WILLIAM,

'My dear noble brother, how little I knew when writing to you on your birthday saying how proud I was of you what a grand, glorious work you were then doing. God bless you, William, is all I can say. Words fail utterly, *nothing* can express what I feel. Deeds are better and with all my strength I mean to try and prevent evil. There is no Young Women's Association here and we must get one begun.

Herbert preaches on the New Crusade on Sunday and will call a meeting next week to get up some Girls' Aid Society. Ladies here full of enthusiasm say to me " Oh Miss Stead what a noble fellow your brother is. How I do honour him."

'Did you see the *Jarrow Guardian*? Most touching. Every time the name Stead was mentioned the whole concourse of near 1,000 men in the raft-yard waved their hats and cheered. Oh William what sacred memories Weir's letter brought. The dear old home – now I am thankful to say free from those wretched people – stands empty and as people gather round it they will tell tales of the harum scarum lad who worked himself nearly to death to save the lads of the village. Many an old inhabitant of Clarty Gutter will speak of you at the Cottage Meetings – oh William my heart is too full, I can't write I can only say how I love and honour you. As we finished reading your last night's leader, Herbert exclaimed "I thank God there are such men left us in the world." Few press men if any ever wrote a leader like that.

'Don't think of replying, you are far too busy, I only write to wish you God speed,

From

(*Signed*) Mary Issie.'

Two letters from Mr. Reginald Brett (not yet Lord Esher) have an interest of their own, as indicating the effect of the revelations on a man who knew everybody in the great social world of London and whose opinion and counsel were always welcome to Stead. In the first, dated July 12, allusion is made to a copy of the *Pall Mall* which Stead has sent: 'It is the only one I have seen, as the distribution of the *P.M.G.* in the provinces has been interrupted.' Mr. Brett proceeds to invite his friend to come down to Windsor for a drive in the Forest: 'Perhaps it will do you good to see some fresh green trees after all the squalor to which you have been treating yourself.' And he concludes with a comment which deserves to be noted: 'My chief regret about the enterprise in which you are engaged is, that though you get a considerable number of kicks, there is a large equivalent of halfpence. I suppose you feel this also. It is unfortunate.'

The 'large equivalent' in Mr. Brett's mind consisted, doubtless, of the *kudos* which the *P.M.G.* and its editor were bound to win, thus making it possible for cynics to question his single-mindedness.

Stead did feel this so himself – he never ceased to feel it. It was one of the things regarding which he was really sensitive. He prided himself – and as we follow him through his whole career we shall see more and more how justly – on being ready to embark on any righteous enterprise with complete disregard for praise or profit.

The second letter, dated July 15, was sent to Stead with permission to print it in the *P.M.G.*, over an initial, should he care to do so. I give it almost in full:

'I have read carefully the numbers of the *P.M.G.* which you gave to me.

'There are no particular expressions which appear to me offensive, or even crude, when once the necessity for plain speaking is admitted.

'But there are one or two allusions, which I think unfair, and which I think you are almost bound to correct, in order that you may be able to say that you remain faithful to the general proposition which you laid down primarily. I take that proposition to be "Liberty for vice, repression for crime."

'With *vice*, then, we have nothing to do, and under these circumstances, I think you have left certain impressions on the public mind which in fairness you ought to remove.

'On page 5, in Wednesday's issue, you say,

' "It is no part of my commission to hold up individuals to popular execration, and the name and address of this creature will not appear in these columns."

'*This person* is one of the worst offenders of a criminal kind, and yet I agree with you that it is not desirable to make his name public.

'But Spurgeon and many others have carried away the impression that these crimes are peculiar to "Princes of the Blood" and "prominent public men," whereas you certainly left me with the idea that the offenders were nearly *all* obscure persons, with money no doubt, but men of no influence or importance whatever in public affairs or even in our social system.

'Surely the wrong impression – if it is wrong – should not be allowed to prevail; as there is no object to be gained by setting class against class, a proceeding I have frequently heard you denounce in others, and in fixing upon a small body of men a stigma perhaps undeserved by them, and certainly shared by the mass of their countrymen of all classes of the community.

'The "Minotaur" himself is a man, as you are perfectly well aware, of no education or position, whose power of mischief depends upon the accident of wealth having accumulated in hands unfit to use it.

'You must not think when I venture to criticize any of your acts or remarks, that there is not a mental reservation full of appreciation of your single-minded desire to do what is best for the country and for your fellow countrymen.

(*Signed*) R. B.'

One would give a misleading account of Stead's *Pall Mall* articles if one ignored entirely the defects in them which caused pain to his adherents – mere defects of taste and judgment, but had enough to evoke pained remonstrances from well-wishers. There was a rather infelicitously-worded paragraph in the *Pall Mall* one afternoon, for instance, which some friends read with dismay. They had believed that Stead, in common with most of his fellow-workers, would do everything possible to have the 'age of consent' raised not merely to sixteen but to eighteen, whereas in these lines not only was the advance to sixteen accepted as quite adequate 'at present,' but it was urged that to extend the limit further would be unfair to girls between sixteen and eighteen who had no other means of livelihood than prostitution.

Conceivably this was an unwonted attempt on Stead's part at man-of-the-world diplomacy – an effort to win over some of his opponents by a show of philosophic breadth of mind. It called forth the following rebuke from one whose warm sympathies were with Stead from first to last:

'May I respectfully call your attention to the enclosed cutting from your paper of Friday last. To my mind it is most objectionable. Surely you or I would rather see our daughters in the workhouse, or in the grave for that matter, than continuing a life of unmeasured pollution on the street? It may be that to stop them would be a "hardship," but how much greater a hardship to spare *any* means in our power that would stop them in such a course? . . .

' . . . The phrase "close time for girls" is also to us a most unfitting one. It suggests that after this close time, as is the case with game, it is no longer wrong to treat them as animals, only in their case to treat them with worse than death.'

Two articles entitled 'The Saunterer in the Labyrinth,' printed in the *Pall Mall* on July 18 and August 10, evoked even stronger rebukes from many friends. In them a worldly-minded contributor had been allowed to give what was by way of being the Devil's point of view, and it was beyond question a very cynical and immoral disquisition, strangely out of place in the paper at such a moment.[1]

At times, also, Stead in his eagerness and impatience and indignation, was incontestably reckless and unfair. In one issue of the *Pall Mall* there was a scornful reference to a great statesman which, to say the least of it, reads like a covert imputation of serious immorality. One of Stead's staunchest supporters at that critical period in his career, wrote to him as follows:

'I strongly appeal to you. I believe the man is a noble fellow – one of the finest figures in our history. Surely, surely you cannot mean to disbelieve good and believe evil on the faith of a woman, or women, like that woman I saw! I have no right on earth to remonstrate with you, but I admire your pluck and don't think you will resent my remonstrance. . . . Is not the line between denunciation of vice and crime on the one hand and denunciation or disparagement of individuals on the other a very clear line? The former is a great duty – the latter an ignoble task unless it be most clearly provable and explicitly worded so that the accused can know what is charged and vindicate himself. I am not a bit affected by the miles of abuse against you for your denunciations of the system you exposed. But I do not believe that men will stand by you, nor women either, if the *P.M. Gazette* makes covert suggestions against individuals without first openly assailing them. . . . I don't myself so read the paragraph, but certainly it is open to an unfavourable construction and is so read by others.

'*Liberavi animam meum.*

'Let me entreat you to consider this.'

But such lapses were not numerous, and were soon forgiven by Stead's friends whose eyes were not blinded by them to what was noble and beautiful in the crusade.

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[1] Stead explained in two 'Occasional Notes' on August 10 and August 14 why he had published these articles, but even to well-disposed critics his defence of his action in the matter seemed unsatisfactory.

V

THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUED

The campaign continued throughout July and August. There seemed to be still danger on July 22 that the Criminal Law Amendment Bill might be postponed. 'Those who imagine,' wrote Stead, in a vigorous leading article on this date, 'that the close time for girls[1] will be extended merely because the Report of our Secret Commission told with an immense impact on the public mind, may be cruelly disappointed. Whether the revelations contained in our Report bear fruit or not will depend, not upon their direct influence on men about town who give the tone to the House, but upon the extent to which they rouse the voting classes in the country to that instant and energetic action to which the Parliament-man bows, as does the Moslem before the revealed will of Allah.'

'The Bill cannot wait (he continued). It must be strengthened and passed in the next fortnight or it will not get passed at all. All hands, therefore, ought to be summoned to save and strengthen the Bill. Fortunately, it is a task of no great difficulty. There is by this time, probably, not a town in the land where men and women have not felt the fierce electric throb of agony and shame that comes to every heart on reading the pitiful and awful story of our Secret Commission. To all such men and women action is a relief, and, fortunately, action is as easy as it is imperative. "Indignation without action," as Mr. Gladstone was never weary of reminding us in 1876, "is mere froth." The indignation that is thrilling the hearts of England to-day is made of sterner stuff ; all that is wanted is direction, leadership, organization, to make its pressure irresistible. And when we say direction, leadership, organization, we do not mean that there is any need for a central wire-pulling apparatus in London, or for a great figurehead to lead the agitation. Nothing of the kind. To be effective the agitation must be spontaneous. What is wanted is local initiative, prompt action on the spot by the right sort of man or woman, and a direct appeal to the local leaders, whether municipal, political, social, religious, or philanthropic, without distinction of sect or party, to speak out decisively against the continuance of a system in which the law itself becomes a pander to lust. It does not require a multitude to

[1] The phrase condemned.

start a meeting. A single human heart, if sufficiently aglow, can do it. It but needs a beginning. All the rest is easy. And is there anyone with the fear of God before his eyes, or the love of man in his heart, who dares stand silent now?'

If their Party leaders failed them in Parliament he went on, so much the more need that the rank and file both in London and the provinces should do their duty. Liverpool, he pointed out, had led the way. There had been a great meeting there in support of the Bill. There should be meetings *everywhere* – from the Mansion House in London down to the humblest village green.

Meetings were held all over England forthwith, Stead himself taking the lead in many of them. Presently, on August 10, the Bill, amended and strengthened, passed safely through the House of Lords. It was felt, however, that the movement which had been initiated by the *Pall Mall Gazette* should not be allowed to relax. A National Vigilance Association was founded which, with Mr. W. A. Coote as its brave and efficient secretary, began immediately its invaluable labours; and two great demonstrations were organized in London to further the cause – a Protection of Girls' National Conference in the St. James's Hall, and a mass-meeting in Hyde Park. Stead, of course, was the hero on both occasions. All voices were eloquent in his praise. His own speeches made an immense impression; and Mrs. Fawcett and others said things which will be cited by future historians of England. But the utterance which carried most weight of all probably, and which even now is calculated to convince that preponderating mass of conservative Englishmen who look askance at Social Reformers and at Leagues of Purity, was a pastoral issued by the Bishop of London. Here were the sober words of a very true-born Briton – perhaps the finest specimen of the John Bull type known to his era: the very incarnation (as that virile old countenance of his proclaims) of all that is strongest and sturdiest and best in the race.

I need not cite these words in full. The gist of them is contained in the opening sentences. The exposure recently made, Dr. Temple began by admitting, had caused the greatest pain 'to many excellent people,' and not a few of them believed that this exposure had done 'more harm than any use to be made of it' could do good. 'I have not shared,' he wrote, 'and do not share, that opinion. The hot indignation that has been roused all over England is certain, in my judgment, to overpower the moral mischief which so many fear. And I feel confident that the result will be a general raising of the moral tone on this subject throughout the country. It will be – in some degree, it is already – more difficult than it was before to speak lightly of impurity. Men's minds have been opened to the fearful evils which are inevitably bound up with this sin. Young men have strong passions, but they have generous instincts, and many who would otherwise have been morally hurt by what has been told have been stirred to horror by the spectacle now unveiled of such callous cruelty.'

VI

HOW STEAD WAS TRIPPED UP. THE TWO TRIALS. THE SENTENCE

At this point we may let Stead resume the story:[1]

'But while all workers for the protection of girlhood rejoiced exceedingly at the deliverance which had been achieved by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, other people gnashed their teeth and raged furiously against what they regarded as one of the most monstrous outrages upon morality that had ever been committed by an English newspaper. An opportunity was soon afforded to these gentry for wreaking their vengeance. . . . The mother of Eliza Armstrong, although she might have been willing to sell her daughter into shame, had not bargained for losing her daughter altogether. . . .

'The story attracted the attention of her neighbours and they began taunting her with having sold her 'Liza. She made an indignant outcry and was taken to the police court. The police were informed by the Salvation Army that the girl was well cared for. The inspector who saw Mr. Bramwell Booth advised him to keep the child where she was if the mother would consent, as she was much better off with the Army than she would have been in the Marylebone slum. He promised to see the mother and secure her consent. He found Mrs. Armstrong obdurate, and he wrote to say that he had done his best, but that as the mother wanted her daughter back she must be sent back. That letter never reached Bramwell Booth's hands, and believing that he had the approval of the police and the consent of the mother, he retained Eliza in Paris.

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[1] *Why I Went to Prison* – the pamphlet already cited.

'As there was a good deal of fuss in the hostile papers, I publicly stated on the platform of St. James's Hall that I had abducted Eliza Armstrong, and that she was very well cared for. This led to my immediate prosecution, and in the dock with me were placed Mr. Bramwell Booth, Mr. Mussabini, who had rendered me valuable services in the under-world with which he had long been familiar; Madame Mourez, a French procuress and midwife, who had certified the maidenhood of Eliza Armstrong; and Madame Combe, who had taken charge of Eliza in Paris.

'We came up first at Bow Street,[1] and afterwards at the Old Bailey. The case attracted an enormous amount of attention; a defence fund of nearly £6,000 was raised, and the leading counsel were engaged on both sides. We then were questioned by the then Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster, now Lord Alverstone, Lord Chief Justice. I defended myself. My fellow defendants were defended by Sir Charles Russell, Mr. H. Matthews (afterwards Home Secretary), Mr. Samuel Waddy, Mr. Horne Took, and others. The judge was Mr. Justice Lopes.

'After a long trial, for which the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Manning, and Bishop Temple, John Morley, Mr. Balfour, Lord Loreburn (then Sir Robert Reid), Mr. Labouchere, Mrs. Butler, and many others were subpœned for the defence, I was convicted, together with my colleague, Mr. Mussabini. Mr. Bramwell Booth and Madame Combe were acquitted. Madame Mourez was sent for six months to prison, where she died. The trial, which was reported in all the leading papers of the world, brought out all the facts of the case, so that every statement which I now make can be verified by reference to the files in the British Museum.

'I had absolutely no chance of an acquittal, for I had admitted in the clearest possible terms that I had taken away the child, believing that I had purchased the consent of the mother, but I had not the consent of the father.

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[1] A letter from wise old Mr. Benjamin Scott, dated Swanage, September 10, is worth citing here, as a reminder of Stead's disregard for appearances. 'One word as a friend,' Mr. Scott writes to him, 'I came down the other day with a gentleman who was reading the *Standard*, and it soon came out that he had been in court the previous day. He made some statements which I was able to contradict, but one remark struck me as worth mentioning to you. He said that you were shabbily dressed and did not look like an editor. Do not undervalue the effect of appearances – it may determine a juryman for or against you. It is a question of character, and the world judges *mostly* by *outside show*. Let me, in confidence and friendship, advise you to go to a first-class tailor for a morning suit and to Truefitt's for a West End cut of hair. Do not throw away a chance in such a strife. Ask Mrs. Stead's advice and abide by it. I know what it will be, for women instinctively know what is proper.'

'The judge ruled that the consent of the mother was nothing, that the consent of the father was everything, and as I had admitted that I had never even asked for the consent of the father, the case against me was so clear I wanted to plead "guilty" the moment that the judge ruled that the consent of the father was essential. I was prevented from doing this by my good friend and lawyer, Sir George Lewis, who through the whole of that memorable time rendered me invaluable service.'

Of the final scene at the Old Bailey Stead gave the following graphic description in an American periodical:[1]

'The jury were absent for a considerable time and the crowded court buzzed with eager conversation as everybody canvassed the possible verdict with his neighbours. I think that I was about the most unconcerned person there. When you know what is going to happen you do not get so excited as those who are still in suspense. In the dock with me were Bramwell Booth and Madame Combe, with them also was Mr. Mussabini, an old war correspondent of Greek descent. The remaining occupants of the dock were a French woman of infamous repute, who was convicted, and died in gaol, and the converted procuress, Rebecca Jarrett, who had aided me, most reluctantly, in exposing the traffic by which she had formerly made her livelihood. Our friends, legal and otherwise, were crowded round the dock confidently expressing their belief in our acquittal. Suddenly there was a thrilling whisper. "They are coming, they are coming." Every one hushed his talk, those who had seats sat down. Those who crowded the corridors craned their necks towards the jury box. The twelve "good men and true," headed by their foreman, filed back into the box. Then the Judge amid a silence as profound as death, asked if they had agreed upon their verdict. "We have," said the foreman. Every one held his breath and waited to hear the next fateful words. It was a verdict of not guilty as to Bramwell Booth and Madame Combe, of guilty against the French woman and the ex-procuress, guilty also against the Greek, and guilty against me. But in my case the jury added an extraordinary rider. They found me

[1] The *Christian Endeavour World.*

guilty of being deceived by my agents, they recommended me to mercy, and wished to put on record their high appreciation of the services I had rendered the nation by securing the passage of a much-needed law for the protection of young girls.

'When the last words were spoken, the tension was relaxed, and the whole court hummed with excitement. I never can forget looking down from the dock upon the crowd below. Some of my friends were very angry. But I could not for the life of me see how the jury could have done otherwise. The foreman of the jury after I had been sent to gaol called upon my wife and explained with tears in his eyes how utterly impossible he had found it to answer the Judge's question in any other way. "Tell him," I wrote to my wife from gaol, "Tell him not to grieve. If I had been in his place I should have done as he did."

'Next day was Lord Mayor's Day, and I spent hours walking up and down the streets through the thousands who turned out to see London's annual pageant. I was going to be secluded from my fellow creatures for some months. I wanted to take my fill of the crowd before I returned to my cell.

'On the day following, the second charge, springing out of the same incident, was tried before a second jury. I took no part in the proceedings, and when the inevitable verdict came we stood up for sentence. The Judge sentenced me to three months' imprisonment. I was so certain I was going to prison for two months, that I with difficulty restrained myself from saying, "My Lord, have you not made a mistake? It ought to be two months." I fortunately did restrain myself. When I got into my cell I found that the sentence ran from the opening of the Sessions, and that the precise period of detention I had to undergo was two months and seven days. The Judge had come as near verifying my premonition as it was possible for him to do.

'When the sentence was pronounced, all our friends crowded round us cheering us with all manner of friendly assurances and not less friendly imprecations on the prosecution. My dear wife, who had displayed the most splendid courage through it all, bade me good-bye, and then the jailer led us down dark corridors into Newgate. The contrast between the hot, crowded, excited court and the cold, silent cell was very great. Another hour passed and then we were packed into the prison van and driven through the streets of London to Coldbath-in-the-Fields.'

VII

A HAPPY ENDING

A word or two in conclusion about the two figures in the drama who, after Stead himself, were most conspicuous – little Eliza Armstrong and poor, brave Rebecca Jarrett.

Rebecca had proved a great disappointment in the witness-box. Under the Attorney-General's ruthless cross-examination, 'faith unfaithful' had kept her 'falsely true.' Fearing lest she should incriminate some of her old associates in vice, and hoping to shield them, she had contradicted herself and lied. The great lawyer, in his cold, impassive way, had treated her like dirt; and even her friends had frowned on her. She was a really pitiable object when the trial ended. But she had an ally in ten thousand in Mrs. Josephine Butler. As one studies the portrait of that dauntless woman a phrase of Meredith's comes back to one: 'There was an armed champion behind those mild features.' Mrs. Butler, shocked not in the slightest degree by her *protégée's* failure, came instantly to her defence in a pamphlet which was read throughout the length and breadth of the land – a really moving sketch of the poor thing's career and character, setting in its true perspective her very intelligible break-down in the court.

Rebecca lived to justify Mrs. Butler's belief in her. General Bramwell Booth, who has kept her in mind and sight ever since, smiles happily when questioned as to her life since those days. An active member of the Salvation Army as long as she had strength and health, she now takes her well-earned rest as an old lady of eighty, loved and esteemed by those around her.

Things were to go well, also, with little Eliza, as was shown by a grateful letter which she once wrote to Stead. She had a good husband, she wrote, and was the proud and happy mother of a family of six.

CHAPTER 9

STEAD'S IMPRISONMENT

November 1885 – *January* 1886

READERS whose memories go back to 1886, and who were interested in W. T. Stead already then, will recall the little threepenny booklet, with a bluish-grey paper cover, which, shortly after his return to freedom, he published under the too-sanguine title, *My First Imprisonment.*

It is a very vivid narrative, very racily written. There is not a sentence in it which is not characteristic of the man; and a two months' imprisonment in circumstances so unique merited description in detail. It was not an easy biographical problem, therefore, whether to give this narrative in full or to condense it. I have decided to condense it slightly. The unimportant passages which I have had to sacrifice will not, I think, be missed. Stead begins with Newgate[1] and Coldbath-in-the-Fields:

'Sentence was pronounced, a buzz of eager conversation filled the crowded court. Friends were pressing round the dock, where we had spent so many exciting days, to say good-bye. All was movement – a feverish murmur of many voices. The long tension had given way, last words were being hurriedly exchanged—"Good-bye, good-bye, God bless you!" "I'd rather be in your place than in that of your judge" – it was Mr. Waugh who said that, although I did not know his voice at the time from other voices rising from below. "Once more, good-bye." And waving my hand to the excited throng I descended the steps, with a confused vision of horse-hair wigs, eager faces, and a patch of scarlet still lingering on my retina. Down we went, Jacques and I – Rebecca and Mme. Mourez had preceded us – and we were prisoners. We had been below for a few minutes every day of the trial, but now we went further afield. Newgate is a deserted gaol. The long corridors, like combs of empty cells, stand silent as the grave. As we were marched down passages and through one iron gate after another, I experienced my first feel of a gaol. Those who have not been in prison will understand it when they in their turn receive sentence of imprisonment. It is a feel of stone and iron, hard and cold, and when, as in Newgate, the prison is empty, there is added the chill and silence of the grave. The first thing that strikes you is the number of iron gates that are to be locked and unlocked, and the word turnkey first seems real to you. Overhead the tiers of cells, with their iron balustrades and iron stairs, rose story after story. It was as if you were walking at the bottom of the hold of some great petrified ship, looking up at the deserted decks. What a sepulchre of hopes it once was, and how many ghosts of the unhallowed dead must walk these aisles and corridors, where rings now but the echo of the clang of the iron gate, or the spring of the lock as the warder passes his prisoners along the *via dolorosa* that leads to the condemned cells. When we reached these grim chambers we turned to the left and entered the warder's office. It was bright and cheerful, and the fire glowed from the grate like a live thing, after the deadly chilly murk of the prison. There we sat and waited, and as the minutes passed, and we waited and waited, some faint sense of the change came over me. At last, after years of incessant stress and strain, and after six months in which every hour had to get through the work of two, I had come to a place where time was a drug in the market – where time was to hang heavily on my hands, where, after being long bankrupt in minutes, I was to be a millionaire of hours.'

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[1] The Old Bailey, the court in which Stead was tried and sentenced, adjoins Newgate Prison.

Presently he was summoned out. Mr. Leslie, the manager of the *Pall Mall*, had got an order to see him, and had come with the welcome news that the sentence began from the first day of the trial and that the term of imprisonment would be up, therefore, on January 18 – news all the more welcome in that it seemed to verify Stead's presentiment about the two months. The interview over, Stead was reconducted to the warder's room. At last the prison van was ready:

'We climbed into the van – not for the first time. We had ridden out from Bow Street in it before, but then all the compartments were full of prisoners. Now we were alone, locked in with the warders. A lamp at one end shed a dim light down the centre. At last we started. As we drove through the prison gates we heard the hoarse roar of the crowd which had waited to give us a parting yell of execration as we left the scene in which for so many days we had been the central figures. It was a poor howl, the crowd apparently being small;

but like Don Silva in the *Spanish Gypsy*, when Father Isidor was hanged we:

'Knew the shout
For wonted exultation of the crowd
When malefactors die – or saints or heroes.

'It was the last sound from the outside world which we heard.'

After ten minutes' drive they arrived at Coldbath-in-the-Fields, where the two male prisoners were put out, Rebecca and Mme. Mourez being taken on to Millbank:

'Jacques and I were made to stand in line, and then marched off through echoing corridors and the usual endless series of grated gates to the reception-room, where some dozen or more fellow-prisoners were already assembled waiting till the dregs had drained into this human cesspool from all the contributory police-stations. We were seated on forms fronting an officer, who entered our names, emptied our pockets, labelled us, and sent us across the room to select caps and shoes. The night was raw and cold. There was a glorious fire close to the officer, but so far from us as to make us only colder for its sight. The officer was smart, somewhat rough, although not with me; but as we sat waiting an hour in the great empty room with our fellow-criminals, he became drowsy, and, contrary to regulations, the criminal crew began to exchange notes. A wild-looking larrikin whispered to me, "Do you know how much them wot was in the Armstrong case has got?" I had the pleasure of announcing my sentence and explaining that we were "them wot was in it," and noting the sensation that followed. "You've got off cheap," said my left-hand neighbour. Then came in a broken-down old gentleman who had evidently seen better days. He had been drinking, and smelt it, although he was sober enough to walk with a stick. When his pockets were searched no fewer than nine pocket-knives were discovered hidden in about as many different pockets. The unearthing of each fresh pocket-knife produced a titter of merriment. "Now, old Dicky Nine Knives," said the officer, "what is your name?" And the poor, dilapidated, red-nosed creature said his name was Mr. ——, journalist! Poor fellow, his journalistic days had been over some time. "Costermongers," a prisoner in Clerkenwell once remarked, "when times are bad turn journalists" – a fact which explains many things.'

Presently the two prisoners had to choose their caps and shoes. Stead had to try on some twenty of the caps – dun-yellow Glengarries without button or tails – before he found one big enough. All the shoes he found too loose, and the pair he eventually decided on had to be filled up with oakum before they could be made to fit :

'When we had all been entered up, we marched in single file downstairs, along passages, until we came to the bath and dressing-room. Here we were halted and sent to bath in detachments. I squirmed a little at the thought of the bath from the description of the Amateur Casual, but I was agreeably surprised. The bath was filled fresh for each prisoner; the water was clean, and although it might have been pleasanter if a little more of the chill had been taken off, for it was nearly nine at night in mid-November, there was nothing to complain of. Your own clothes are then taken away, and a prison suit given you. The suits are allotted in sizes. Jacques being large and stout, was ill to fit, and his toilet took him a long time. As we had come in with drawers and flannels, we were allotted underclothing – fairly comfortable, although the drawers are short in the leg. Braces are superfluities of civilization. So are cuffs, collars, and neckties. The prisoner's complete outfit is as follows: Cap and shoes, selected in the reception-room; a pair of worsted stockings, even more monumental specimens of industry and ingenuity than the boots – which was darn and which was original stocking no one could tell, and in the darning one of the heels had somehow managed to stray half down the foot towards the toe ; flannel shirt and drawers; a blue-striped cotton shirt; trousers, waistcoat, coat, pocket handkerchief, and stock. The stock is a narrow strip of cloth, which buttons round the neck and over which the shirt collar folds. There is only one pocket in the suit into which the large, coarse, pocket handkerchief is thrust. The trousers are held *in situ* by the waistband. At Coldbath the band had only one buckle, and a hole pierced to receive it. If I might make a suggestion to benevolent governors, it is that wherever the single-pronged waistband is used they will pierce more than one hole on the thong of the buckle. The girth of prisoners differs so much that if there were three holes an inch apart it would conduce much to both comfort and seemliness. Where there is only one hole, and the prisoner is slim, he has continually to be hitching up his breeches. It is a small reform, and it could easily be carried out. At

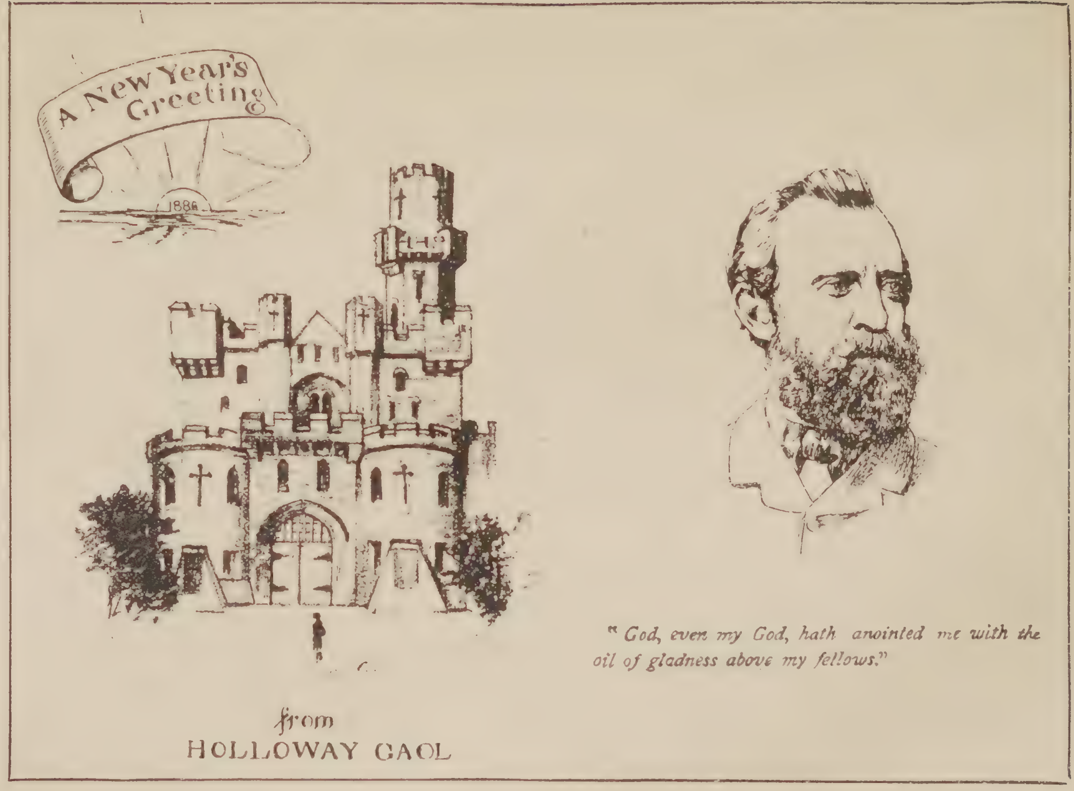
Holloway the waistband has the ordinary double sharp-pronged buckle, which makes its own holes, and this, of course, is the best. But somebody no doubt is wearing my old breeches to-day, and although they were of a most lovely hue—a fine shade of rich creamy-coloured yellow, plentifully bespattered with the broad arrow—he will be often tempted, if he be thin and of an impatient disposition, to swear at the absence of means for girthing himself up tight. When dressed complete a small pocket comb is given you and a pair of leather boot-laces, an article I never possessed since I gave up wearing a leather boot-lace as a watch-guard. When the last loiterer had finished his toilette we tramped back to the reception-room, where, after a time, we were taken off to our cells. Before we went, however, a tin, looking like an old American beef tin with something like paste at the bottom of it and a small loaf of hard whole-meal brown bread were handed to each of us. I thought of the waiter at the London Club where I had dined the night before, and valorously put the tin to my lips, following the example of my neighbours. The viscous fluid crawled slowly down the tin and touched my lips. And there it stopped. Gruel at the best is an abomination. But prison gruel without any salt is about as savoury a beverage as the contents of the editorial paste pot. There was salt in my cell I was told, and carrying our skilly and our bread in our hands, we were marched off to the reception wing, where we were to sleep that night. The warder who conducted us was a decent fellow. " You had better say good-bye," said he; "you will not see each other again." '

While they were trudging to their cells the warder told them that the distinction between 'hard labour' and not hard labour was a deceptive one. 'As a matter of fact,' he said, 'I should prefer hard labour, for you don't do much more work and you do get a bit more food.' Stead continues:

'Here was my cell. As I entered it my first sensation was one of pleasant satisfaction. There was the plank bed. I had heard so much about it from Irish members, and had so often alluded to it in my campaign in the north, that it seemed almost like an old acquaintance standing up there against the wall. The gaoler explained the whereabouts of the various articles, handed me the bedclothes and a mattress about an inch thick, and then left me to my meditations. The cell was better than I expected – that is to say, it was larger, loftier, and not a bad kind of a retreat, immeasurably superior to all the hermit's cells I had seen or heard of. There was a jet of gas, turned off and on by a tap outside the cell, the clean scrubbed wooden table and stool, and there was also the wooden salt cellar. Prison salt cellars are of wood and there is no stinting of quantity. I salted my skilly and broke the bread into it to soften it, fished it out with my wooden spoon and tried to eat a piece or two. I unrolled my bedclothes, laid my plank bed down, stretched the mattress, and felt thoroughly glad to be alone after all the turmoil. Here was quiet at least. After a little time I laid down and slept. I woke once or twice and heard the chimes of a clock in some distant spire, and dozed again, with a strange kind of consciousness of the presence of an immense multitude of friendly faces all around me. The enthusiastic audiences that I had addressed in the north were visible as you see things in a camera obscura, on this side and on that, and I heard the dim and ghostly echoes of their cheers in the otherwise unbroken silence of the prison. At a quarter to six the bell rang, and every one was on the alert. A warder opened the door and gave me instructions. I was only in a reception cell! R $\frac{2}{7}$, that is to say, in the seventh cell on the second floor of the reception wing. I would have to be taken to my destined abiding place in the course of the day. I need not, therefore, clean out my cell, or attend chapel, until I got into my regular cell. A prisoner swept out my cell. Then one of the principal warders came round. He was a big, kindly man. "You may have made a mistake," he said. "But you have done a good work."'

Stead's next visitor was the chaplain, a man of education but unsympathetic and ill-mannered – 'the only creature,' Stead notes, 'among all those to whose care spiritual and moral I was entrusted, who ever said an unkind word.'

'At twelve o'clock (the narrative continues) the door of the cell was opened and a tin pot and the usual brown little loaf handed inside. At the bottom of the tin was a tough, gluey composition, which on reference to the dietary scale I found was called a suet pudding. I pecked a little hole in it, tasted it as a kind of sample, and then desisted. More hours passed, and then I was asked whether I would like to see a gentleman of the name of "Waugh"? "Wouldn't I just?"'



A New Year's Greeting

1886

"God, even my God, hath anointed me with the oil of gladness above my fellows."

from
HOLLOWAY GAOL

Facsimile of a Card which W. T. Stead sent to his Friends and Well-wishers from Holloway Gaol

Of the interview which ensued we have an account from Mr. Waugh himself, with some interesting details as to Stead's appearance. A warder, of course, sat with them in the room in which it took place. Mr. Waugh was not allowed either to shake hands with or otherwise welcome his friend. Stead wore a yellow Glengarry-shaped cap, a loose-fitting short jacket of rough, light-yellow material, buttoned at the throat, of course without a collar, showing all the tops of the shirt and waistcoat in irregular line. He appeared to have been 'cropped,' but of course the visitor was allowed to ask no questions. His trousers were loose, baggy, of yellow linen of the duck type, with the Government arrows stamped with ink in four different places. His boots were large, and must have been uncomfortable; one was patched upon the toe, and the other had a thick, new yellow leather sole upon it. He wore a round cloth label on his left breast marked R$\frac{2}{7}$. Stead looked very cold, and put his hands inside his baggy sleeves as if for warmth.[1]

Another of Stead's closest friends and strongest allies, Dr. Clifford, was presently allowed a few minutes with him, and then he was conducted to his new cell:

> 'What a welcome change it was to my new cell can only be appreciated by those who have shivered for hours in an unwarmed cell. For my new cell was really heated up to 60 deg., and the pleasure of the change was immense. All pleasures are comparative. If you feed a man on bread and water he will rejoice more over skilly than an epicure over a Lord Mayor's banquet. The great secret of enjoyment

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[1] *Night and Day*, the periodical in which Mr. Waugh's visit is described, draws attention to the contrast between Stead's experience and that of a famous cavalry officer who, ten years previously, had been convicted of an indecent assault of the most cruel and aggravated kind on a young lady in a railway carriage. Mr. Justice Brett, in passing sentence, had said there was no palliation for the crime; and the jury had seen no extenuating circumstances in the case. As a first-class misdemeanant, the officer in question had been, in the first instance, placed in a different reception cell from the other prisoners, and throughout his term of punishment kept separate from them. He was allowed to wear his own clothing, to buy his own food, to furnish his own rooms – he had two allotted to him – with what was reasonable, necessary, and not extravagant; to have wine at his own cost, not exceeding one pint, or malt liquor not exceeding one quart, per day. He was not required to do any work, clean his apartment, make his bed, or perform any menial office, all these being done for him by an officer of the prison. He was allowed books and newspapers. Lastly, he was able to see his friends in his apartment between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.

is to do without for a time. I never thought I could have hungered and thirsted so keenly for a bit of chop as after my first three days on low diet. As for a cup of tea, that seemed a beatific vision of unattainable bliss. My pleasure at the warmth was somewhat damped by the announcement that I was to have no mattress. Criminal convicts must sleep on bare boards. I winced a bit, but I remembered poor Williams's receipt, and took courage. As some may not have seen that receipt, I will repeat it here. When you have to sleep on bare boards you will discover that the weight of your body rests almost entirely on your shoulders and your hip joints. Wrap your coat round your shoulders, your breeches round your loins, and, if you have no oakum, put your waistcoat in your hat for a pillow, and you will be able to sleep without waking at midnight with aching bones. If you are found out you will be reported; you are not allowed to sleep in your clothes. There is a peep-hole in the door of every cell through which the warder looks to see that you are all right according to regulations, but unless he has a spite against you he will not, as a rule, discover that your clothes are round your hips instead of being outside the bed.'

Stead enjoyed his two days in B$\frac{2}{8}$. The dense fog which had prevailed lifted, and he could see to read. There was in the cell a Bible, a Prayer Book, and a library book, Dean Vaughan's *Consolation for the Sorrowful.*

'Then again (he continues) I was allowed the luxury of having something to do. I scoured out my cell in the morning with hearty good will, and scrubbed my table and stool. Then I set to work to pick oakum. It was not the proper oakum, but coir fibre. I had to pick from ten ounces to one pound. It is an excellent meditative occupation. But it is hard at first on the finger-nails. Mine wanted trimming; for if the nails are not short, the leverage on the nail in disentangling the fibre causes considerable suffering. "How do prisoners do when they want their nails cut?" I asked. "Bite 'em," laconically replied the warder. You don't know how strange it feels to have neither knife nor scissors, nor pens, nor pencils, nor pockets, although of course it may be said that you don't need pockets if you have nothing to put into them. . . . The ventilator, which can be opened and closed at will, is under the window. The gas jet is over the table. The plank bed is raised from the floor just high enough to allow mice free space to frolic under the planks. The bed-clothes are rolled up tight every morning and the roll stood on end on the highest of three shelves in the corner. There is a little whitening for polishing the drinking can, the can itself, a piece of soap, and the salt cellar. In my salt-cellar I found a pathetic little note from the previous occupant of my cell. I envied him his lead pencil; the paper was one of the ordinary brown sheets supplied to all prisoners. He had written it, apparently, the first day of his imprisonment and buried it in the salt cellar, where he had forgotten it. This message – half illegible now – I retain as one of the most pathetic mementoes of my incarceration. But in the hope that this letter from within the prison walls may yet perchance meet the eye of the poor mother whose son occupied my cell I reproduce it here. It runs thus:

' "24 (illegible), 1885.

' "My dear Mother, – This is my first day here after my unjust conviction. The solitude is really dreadful to bear, but must go through with it bravely. Comfort Fanny and the children, and do not let them want for anything. They had better move into the little cottage I was after, as then Arthur would live with them and do something towards the rent. Do look after Fanny, as if anything were to happen to her it would break my heart, and nothing would be worth living for."

'How my heart went out to the unknown writer of these lines. Dear soul, how I wondered, and still wonder where he is. Whether anything has happened to Fanny. And who was Fanny? His daughter, his sister, or some one whom he loved! Who knows? But there the dingy little paper lies, with its message of love and kindly forethought for dear mother and the children, but especially for Fanny – life would not be worth living if anything happens to her. It was a blessed message to me, cheering me in my cell as no chapel service or printed word cheered me in Coldbath. For I thought, mayhap, if Fanny is under sixteen or even eighteen, there is less danger of anything happening to her now; and she is but one, and there are many Fannys. And yet even for that poor prisoner's sake alone was it not worth while?'

In a neighbouring cell was an elderly man who was in for stealing a pail and who sang hymns cheerfully. In another was a young fellow who had eighteen months for passing counterfeit coin – as yet he had only done six. 'Your three months will soon be done,' he remarked to Stead sympathetically as they trudged to chapel in single file. On the whole Stead liked his fellow-prisoners with one or two exceptions, and he felt 'a strange new sense of brotherhood with convicts and criminals' which in itself was 'a boon worth coming to gaol to win.'

He now gives us the order of the day at Coldbath:

'At a quarter to six the bell rang. You rise and dress in the dark. At six the warder opens the door, and you throw your bedclothes over the polished iron balustrade that runs round the corridor outside the cells. The door is locked again, and you scour out your cell. Then the door is unlocked, and you bring in your bedclothes and roll them up, strap them tightly, and set them away on the shelf. You are asked if you have any applications to make for the governor, doctor, or chaplain, and your application is duly noted and reported. Then you take your oakum, picked and unpicked to the warder who weighs it, examines its quality, and gives you out a fresh quantum for the day. It is a strange sight, a great gaol all stone and iron, with innumerable gas jets twinkling down the corridors and the prisoners moving to and fro with their bundles of oakum. When people run all round the world in search of novel sights and strange sensations, what a mine of unexplored novelties they neglect in London gaols! At eight o'clock your skilly and bread are handed in, and then about half-past eight the summons comes for chapel. You turn out of your cell, put on your hat, and stand with your face to the door of your cell till the word is given to march. Then you face about and march in single file along the corridors, upstairs and along many passages. The road to chapel is like the road to heaven – it is a narrow way and it winds upward still. Both at Coldbath and Holloway the chapel is perched as near the sky as the building permits. Chapel at Coldbath was a mockery. We filed in, and took our seats about a couple of feet apart; very few prisoners brought their Prayer-books or their Bibles. A distant and more or less inarticulate sound as of reading is heard. Now and again we stump down on our knees, but do not bend our heads, or close our eyes, or take part in any responses. Oh! how I longed for a stave of song, or even for the melodious music of the inarticulate organ. But there was not a sound, save the voice of Chaplain Stocken a-droning away from the desk. When that ceased, we were marched back again to our cells where we picked oakum. At eleven the governor or the chief warder came round. You have to stand with your back to the wall with your hat in your hand, and answer any questions that are put to you. The inspection is brief. If your cell is clean and neat and you have no complaint to make, it is almost momentary, and the door is locked. The door is locked and unlocked about twelve times in the day. After inspection, or sometimes after dinner, you go out for exercise. We marched in single file round and round the exercise ground. It was a pleasant sight for me to see the sky again, and the green grass, and to hear from over the high walls of the prison the welcome sounds of common life. The rumble and the roar of the traffic, the cries of the street sellers, and even the strains of a barrel-organ sounded pleasanter to the prisoner and captive than they do to the free man outside. Dinner is served at twelve – once we had soup which tasted well but did not digest, and another day two whole potatoes boiled in their jackets, together with the unvarying 6 oz. of whole-meal bread. Supper – bread and skilly – comes at five, and then your gas is lit, and you can read till eight. You are not allowed to go to bed before, why, I don't exactly know. I have a somewhat weak spine, and my back ached so badly sometimes; but a stretch, even on a plank bed, is forbidden before a quarter-past eight.

'The monotony of my day was broken by a visit from an excellent, earnest, and sympathetic scripture reader, and an interesting assistant chaplain, with whom it was, I think, that I had quite a friendly polemic concerning the sacrifice of Isaac. Mr. Maxwell held Dr. Clifford's views; but at that time I had not read *Daily Strength for Daily Living*. I forget how it came about; but in some odd way, the justification of the conduct of the Chief Director was made to hinge on the interpretation of the command given to Abraham, and it was debated accordingly. My brother came to see me to get some cheques signed, and to read me a very kind message of sympathy from Cardinal Manning, who throughout has ever been the kindest and most thoughtful of friends. My solicitor called about pending cases, and swore a good comfortable oath at the "degradation" of my costume. I did not feel degraded one whit. . . . At last, after being three days in Coldbath, I was summoned to receive another visitor, who brought me news that the Home Secretary had decided to transfer me to Holloway without waiting to communicate with the judge. An hour afterwards I had doffed my prison garb, and was driving in a hansom to Holloway gaol.

Stead's sojourn in Holloway was to be a period of almost unbroken happiness:

'Never had I a pleasanter holiday, a more charming season of repose. I had been trying in vain to get rest ever since the famous fiasco of Penjdeh left England and Russia at peace, and at last it had come. I had sought it in vain in Switzerland, but I found it in Holloway. Here, as in an enchanted castle, jealously guarded by liveried retainers, I was kept secure from the strife of tongues, and afforded the rare luxury of journalistic leisure. From the governor, Colonel Milman, to the poor fellow who scrubbed out my room, every one was as kind as kind could be. From all parts of the Empire, even from distant Fiji, rained down upon me every morning the benedictions of men and women who had felt in the midst of their life-long labours for the outcast the unexpected lift of the great outburst of compassion and indignation which followed the publication of the " Maiden Tribute." I had papers, books, letters, flowers, everything that heart could wish. Twice a week my wife brought the sunlight of her presence into the pretty room, all hung round with Christmas greetings from absent friends, and twice a week she brought with her one of the children. On the day after Christmas the whole family came, excepting the little two-year-old, and what high jinks we had in the old gaol with all the bairns! The room was rather small for blind man's buff, but we managed it somehow, and never was there a merrier little party than that which met in cell No. 2 on the ground floor of the E wing of Holloway Gaol, which last Christmas was in the occupation of a certain "misdemeanant of the first division," named Stead.'

Visitors were allowed in to see him every day, only those persons who had taken part in the recent agitation – Bramwell Booth among them – being excluded. Members of the *P.M.G.* staff came regularly:

'It is specially laid in the rules for the guidance of misdemeanants of the first division that they may work at their trades, and I worked at mine all through my term. I got the newspapers every morning at a quarter-past seven, and at ten o'clock the messenger got his copy. It was rather amusing to me to receive lamentations over the erratic course which the *Pall Mall Gazette* was taking "in the absence of my guiding hand," while the erratic articles complained of were often from my own pen. There was no restriction placed upon me as to what I wrote with two exceptions. I was not to allude in any way to the discipline of the gaol or to any of the subjects connected with the New Crusade. I could publish what I pleased when I came out, but during my incarceration nothing was to appear from me in print that related directly or indirectly to my judge, my trial, to the Criminal Law Amendment Act, or to anything thereunto belonging. This gave me leisure to write a paper which I had long brooded over, on the gradual development of "Government by Journalism," together with some speculations as to the modifications necessary to enable the editor to wield his sovereignty with greater knowledge and better credentials than he can boast of at present.

'I do not think that I have ever been in better spirits in my life or enjoyed existence more intensely than in these two months. So far as I could I let all my friends know how jolly I was, and how entirely the prayers of all my kind supporters had been answered so far as my inward peace and joy were concerned. But they did not seem to be able to believe it. I was constantly receiving letters exhorting me to keep up my heart under this tribulation, and all the while I was far happier and less tribulated than any of my correspondents. My wife declared that she saw more of me since I went to gaol than she had done for the previous six months. Of course I was cut off from many of my best friends, but they wrote constantly, and although I lost their company, I gained time to do work that they all wanted to have done. Altogether, I can best sum up my estimate of the "punishment" inflicted on a first-class misdemeanant at Holloway by saying that if ever I am in a position to ask a guerdon from my country for my profession, I will humbly petition the powers that be to permit any editor of a daily newspaper to convert himself into a first-class misdemeanant at will, for terms of one, two, or three months. There is nothing like being in gaol for getting rid of bores and getting on with work, and I am not sure that if a small voluntary gaol were started by a limited liability company to be run on first-class misdemeanant principles, and managed as admirably as Holloway Gaol, it would not pay a handsome dividend. It would certainly be an incalculable boon to the over-driven, much-worried writers of London.

'I was warmer in Holloway Gaol than I have been since I came out of it. I was immeasurably quieter. The above is an inside view of my "little room," as the good chaplain always euphemistically described our cells. It is a double cell, just like a college room. I had the same cell as Mr. Yates, of whom traditions still linger in the gaol. I was well supplied with flowers and fruit. I got some lovely boxes of flowers from the south of France, bunches of fragrant violets from Glasgow in the north and Devon in the south. Pots of lilies-of-the-valley, forced into premature bloom, sweetened, and gay tulips and graceful cyclamen brightened, the cell. At Christmas time the walls were bright with the holly berries, shining red amidst the dark leaves. No Yule Log was supplied on Christmas Eve, but with that exception nothing was wanting.'

On Christmas night the warder entered with a preternaturally grave face, carrying a Lowther Arcade lion in his arms, muzzled with one of the patent dog muzzles which had recently come into use in London – a lion that could be made to roar by pulling at a contrivance in its interior. A card dropped from its jaws and the imprisoned editor read: '*To our muzzled Chief, from Four of his Staff*'. . . . The animal still exists, being for many years past domiciled in Smith Square, Westminster.

At Holloway Stead paid 6*s*. a week for the rent of his room, 3*s*. 6*d*. for service, and 2*s*. 6*d*. – he came to forget exactly for what.[1] Possibly fires and gas. He had his own little kettle and made his own tea. Anything he wanted in the shape of food was ordered outside. He had a comfortable bed, easy chairs, a hearth-rug, a cosy little tea-table, and a writing-desk. At a quarter to six he rose, made his bed, and dressed:

'At a quarter past seven came the papers, which I read at breakfast. At twenty minutes to nine the principal warder came to take me to chapel. I created a great scandal once by whistling on the stairs – a thing unheard of in the precincts. The face of the warder who heard it was a study. He was an old man-of-war's man, who had served his twenty-one years and earned his pension. He had stood by his great gun as Admiral Hornby ploughed his way through the Dardanelles in that famous January night when the Russians were advancing on Constantinople. He had been invalided home from Cyprus with fever, and had served on the Australian, East Indian, and American stations; but the scandalous phenomenon of a prisoner dancing down the stairs and whistling for sheer lightness of heart was something so unprecedented as almost to upset his equanimity. "Hush," said my guardian, "I have not heard so much whistling in the gaol all the years I have been here!" I enjoyed chapel immensely at Holloway. "Best attended place of worship in Holloway," said one of my warders, and no congregation takes more vigorous part in the services. I was up in the chief warder's pew, on a line with the good chaplain, Plaford, and used to peer down through the red curtains upon the well-filled chapel, and imagine how much worse I was than all the poor fellows below. Some mere boys were there, whose appearance touched me much. The prisoners in appearance are as respectable-looking as members of Parliament. Some of course are worse, but some are better. What struck me most was the absence of old men. There were not half a dozen grey heads in all the congregation. The way in which they joined in the responses was an example to the Abbey and the Cathedral, especially in the Litany which we had twice a week. The exemplary fashion in which they recited the Creeds was most surprising. They went through it with the precision of machines. And didn't they sing! Contrasted with the miserable mockery of the dead-alive drone at Coldbath, the service at Holloway was full of sweetness and light. All of us that could read brought our hymn-books and prayer-books, and there was nothing that was more humanizing and more pleasant than the twenty minutes' service in gaol. The chaplain, Mr. Plaford, a sincere, strenuous Evangelical, with a famous voice and a kind heart, I liked very much; but I wanted to throw a hymn-book at his head once. It was Christmas morning when he said no one there could be touched by any appeal to their love for wife or children; that must all have been trampled under foot long ago, or they would never have found themselves in gaol on Christmas Day. Apart from my own case, this seemed scandalously unjust. Many a man finds himself in gaol, not because he has trampled under foot his domestic affection, but because they have tempted him into crime. The good chaplain would be all the better if he were to read once in a way not merely the Gospel according to St. Matthew and St. Mark, but also the Gospel according to Victor Hugo, in *Les Misérables* and *L'Homme Qui Rit*.'

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[1] As we shall see in subsequent chapters, Stead was apt to be almost as unmindful of finance as Captain Shandon!

Letters arrived at about half-past ten. At eleven Stead went out for exercise, always in one appointed place – round and round the prison hospital; and he fed the sparrows. He was all his life a great lover of birds. At one came dinner from the Holloway Castle tavern; from two to five visitors; at five, tea. The bell rang for bed-time at twenty minutes past eight and at half-past the warder shuffled round in his list slippers, peering through peep-holes to see if all had gone to bed. And so we come to the last lines of Stead's story of his imprisonment:

'The gas was turned down from the outside, according to regulations, but as I turned down my gas myself inside, before the warder's round, the outside tap was not interfered with. Thus, when, as often happened, I woke at two, three, or four in the morning and could not sleep, I could get up and write. As a rule I slept well, but nine hours in bed was sometimes more than I could manage. When at last the time came to leave, I was quite melancholy at the prospect. I always cling to places and people so much that there is a great laceration of tendrils and fibres whenever I am transplanted. My book was not finished, and I should never have the same quiet again – not, at least, until my next imprisonment; and then, perchance, my sentence may have to be worked out on much less happy conditions. Happier they could not be. From the day I received notice that in consideration of certain circumstances not specified, but not very difficult to imagine, Her Majesty had been pleased to grant me a pardon conditional on my conforming to the rules and regulations laid down for the guidance of a misdemeanant of the first division, my position was almost ideal. My only regret was that I could not share some of the gladness and peace which made hard work restful with those who were left in the hurly-burly outside. I have ever been the spoiled child of fortune, but never had I a happier lot than the two months I spent in Happy Holloway.'

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By way of epilogue there was given at the end of the booklet the text of a long letter which Stead wrote from Holloway to his friend the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, and which Mr. Hughes published in the *Methodist Times*. It attracted wide attention at the time, especially in Nonconformist circles; but it is too long to reproduce here. Its most noteworthy passages come towards the close, beginning with the familiar axiom of which Stead became so fond: 'What we want is not to be Christians but to be Christs.'

'A whole gulf (he declares) cuts us off from all but a few of our fellow-creatures. Yet we are one with them; one with the thief, the harlot; that is, we ought to be. And until we are, we are not Christs. As long as any supposed goodness, or rank, or ability interrupts the freest possible flow of sympathy, born of consciousness of complete identity with the weakest and meanest of our kind, we are out of Christ, even out of His humanity.'

And then he comes close to his great crusade:

'What is it that we are called to do in relation to fallen women, and girls who are likely to fall; to fallen men, and they who will in turn fall? Simply this, to be a Christ to them. This only is laid on every believer. If he does not feel it, then he is not a believer. For if he believes in God as revealed in Christ then he must "be about his Father's business," and that business is personal service for the weak, the suffering, the tempted, the fallen, and the lost. This work cannot be done by subscriptions. Christ did not bribe a superfluous angel by liberal subscriptions in order to be crucified by deputy; neither can individual Christians be Christs by deputy.[1] All are not called to all kinds of this work, but all are called to some branch or other, even if it only be the witnessing for Christ by a sympathizing look or word to the sorrowing and the outcast. . . . In presence of prostitution, we stand before a dungeon indeed, from which egress, although physically possible, and it is not always that, is often morally impossible. These women with their lost motherhood and maidenhood are indeed sick and in prison, but who visits them? . . . Should not it be not merely a thing possible, but a thing that is a matter of course, if Churches really made men and women Christs, that every inmate of every evil house should be personally known, personally loved, and personally laboured for, by some one of the many who call themselves by the name of the Redeemer? It is a disagreeable task no doubt. But if there is not enough God in all our Churches to furnish forth sufficient Christlike men and women to do this thing, what do we mean by calling ourselves Christian? And I would like to say to you from my very heart how sore a trial it has been to me to read of the way in which, in the name of purity, and by the aid of the very Act which we got passed to help women, poor lost ones have been driven from the only place that sheltered them into the fields, the streets, and even into the stye. Sad, sad, indeed, is this cruel torture of the least guilty, while the men go scot free. I would not close a single brothel, not if I could do so by holding up a little finger, until I was sure the poor girls had homes to go to and some means of getting their daily bread. What I said at St. James's Hall when I quoted Coleridge's saying that

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[1] In his *Truth About Russia* (1888), Stead mentions that Tolstoi had read this letter, which had a wide circulation in leaflet form, and said to him that what he liked best in it was this sentence.

"Vice alone will shelter wretchedness,"

often comes back to me. Would to God that in this land of ours, Christianity would be, in this respect, as good as vice; it is not at present. And why? Because we are not like Christ.

'Far more important than reclaiming the lost is preventing the fall of those who are ready to perish. And what a world there is as yet unexplored! How much of the Cross that lies heavy on womanhood would be lightened if each man and woman realized that this day and all days, he and she must be a Christ to their servant-girl; and let her see in them, if it were only to be a smile or kind word or sympathy, that in them also dwelt something of that spirit which was in Christ. And to our children, and to our friends, and to those whom we meet in business! Can we not in this matter endeavour to be helpful, not preachful, and ask ourselves nightly ere we sleep, Have I been a Christ to-day to all those whom I have met? A rosary[1] with the names of all we know, to be told at night, with the searching question, How far we have been Christ to each, interpreting God and bringing them into communion with man, might be helpful. No one wants the New Crusade to monopolize all the energies of all the good people. But the subject should never be forgotten by any, and every opportunity must be seized to strengthen the growing moral sentiment of the community on this question. Children should no longer be thrust, all unknowing as Eve before the Fall, into a nest full of tempting serpents. In every district there should be a White Cross Organization and Young Women's Association, with reading-room, registry office, and all the appurtenances thereof. And near every church or chapel there should be at least one small room in which a shelterless girl may find refuge, if perchance she finds herself in the streets at night. What the world wants is two things combined – love and knowledge. Every organization, whether of a vigilance association or a Church, or, it may be, a single individual on whom falls the Christ care of the lost, needs to study the question as carefully as a scientific problem, not in his parlour or his vestry, but face to face with facts, by actual converse with actual men and women.

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[1] Here we have for the first time the idea to which Stead was later to return in *Letters from Julia*. See p. 339.

'And the third thing that is much borne in upon me is the importance of attending to the leading of the Holy Spirit. I have been surrounded with the lives and journals of the Friends. These men believed in God; they were the Christs of their time, and they were conscious of the constant guidance of God. That is what we need renewing badly just now. The very idea that God can and will guide you and me as much as He guided any of the ancient notables whose lives got written about in the Bible, is to many absurd. But it seems to me that God has as much work needing doing here as in the Wilderness of Sin, and that there is as much need for God-inspired teachers in this nursery of nations as there was down in Judæa. We need to keep our souls more "open on the Godward side," if we would hear the Oracle Divine. But if we do, if we are "Ready, aye Ready," we shall be guided as much as Abraham was when he came from Ur of the Chaldees, or Cromwell when he framed his New Model, or Mrs. Fry when she went to Newgate.'

CHAPTER 10

FROM THE PRISON POST-BAG

November 1885–*January* 1886

'I had a presentiment that Whit-Sunday, when last you saw me,' wrote Morley to Stead towards the end of November 1885, in a letter full of kind intention but a little suggestive of Job's Comforters, 'that your enterprise would turn out tragically. You don't think it has. So be it. I only wish you well.'

At Coldbath-in-the-Fields, as we have seen, there had not lacked a touch of something like tragedy. Real tragedy would doubtless have ensued had not the over-wrought and exhausted prisoner been removed in good time to Holloway. But in his 'mediæval castle' Stead really does seem to have been, most of the time, extremely happy. He had melancholy moods such as come to all mercurial natures – moods in which he was depressed by the thought of his own shortcomings; but his active brain never allowed itself to be clogged for long with vain regrets, and in most of the copious correspondence which soon came and went in the Prison Post-Bag there are signs of no feelings save those of hope and energy and determination. 'This week in Gaol,' we find him writing to Mrs. Fawcett before his first week there had been quite completed, 'has been one of the happiest in my life. A great and priceless privilege it has been to know that by suffering this trivial discomfort one could save scores, it may be hundreds, of poor girls from a life to which prison is paradise.'

At this time, as appears from another passage in the letter, Stead had never actually met Mrs. Fawcett, but their friendship grew apace. Mrs. Fawcett had been one of those who had striven most strenuously to secure the change to Holloway, and she was now to prove her care for his well-being in another very practical way by sending him, with a charmingly-written letter, an extremely comfortable dressing-gown which had belonged to her husband, Professor Fawcett, who had worn it only a few times before his death – it had been a gift to him from Mrs. Fawcett's sister, Miss Agnes Garrett, and was therefore 'a sort of sacred possession.' Both Stead and Mrs. Stead were delighted with the gift and with the touchingly kind thought behind it, and the dressing-gown was to remain in use to the very end of Stead's life.

The letter in which Stead thanks Mrs. Fawcett for this present is one of those few wherein he betrays depression. Her reply is full of wise sympathy. He must not be discouraged, she tells him, just because he may sometimes feel that his 'great work could have been in some respects better done.' 'It is what men and women *aim at* that counts for most,' she urges. And she copies out for him Browning's familiar lines. Then, after a few words of admiration for a speech of Mrs. Butler's which she has heard, she concludes thus:

'It is an immense thing to have appealed to *men*, as this movement set going by you has done. It is comparatively no good rescuing the poor women if more are entrapped to take their places. The most important part of the whole movement is that which is directed straight at the better feelings and generosity of men. Do not be cast down. A great movement – as great as Wycliffe's or Luther's – has been set going, and by you.'

There are some interesting passages in Stead's letter to Mrs. Fawcett. In one he confesses that Browning – whom Mrs. Fawcett has been quoting – is beyond him. Lowell, he declares, is his Prophet. He expresses his gratification over some words which Mrs. Fawcett has written about Mrs. Josephine Butler. 'She, more than any woman I know, (he says) has taught her sex that feeling of respect for womanhood which Burns and the French philosophers taught men to have for their manhood. That is a great lever. For, though I am glad to appeal to men, yet it is self-help women most need, self-respect and a sense of the sanctity of womanhood.'

One other letter from Mrs. Fawcett to Stead is of special interest. In the course of a review of Leslie Stephen's life of Prof. Fawcett Stead has used an expression which has drawn from his new friend a reflection upon the uncharitable attitude taken up generally by Christians towards sceptics – or as she prefers to put it – by gnostics towards agnostics ; she hastens to add that Stead himself is 'surprisingly just' about unbelievers. A man well known to her and to Stead and esteemed by both, has recently stated his conviction that 'the *only* source from which any good can be expected is through the Christian Churches.' With this idea she disagrees entirely. 'Nearly all the really splendidly good people whom I have known (she writes) have not been Christians; and where goodness, purity, and unselfishness are so sorely needed in the struggle with sin it seems to me a pitiful blunder to reject them and set them on one side because their possessors do not accept as true the inscrutable mysteries of the Christian faith. It is what people *are*, not what they believe, which is the really important thing. Every really good man or woman created an atmosphere, as it were, around himself which makes goodness easier and baseness less easy to those about them. That, even to non-Christians, is the inestimable value of the life and example of Christ. I hope I have not wounded you in anything I have said. I should grieve very much to do so because I feel so deeply indebted to you.'

Words such as these, coming from such a source, could not but have their effect on a receptive mind like Stead's. In a sense Mrs. Fawcett was preaching to the converted, but the getting rid of ingrained prejudices is not a quick or easy process, and Stead's religious attitude was not yet as catholic as it afterwards became. Ten or twenty years later he would not have had to evince surprise, as he does now, at hearing of 'so many good people who are not Christians . . . so many Christians without Christ'; or to add that he himself happens to know of relatively few – 'John Stuart Mill, for one; Mazzini, for another: both Christlike men.'[1] He rejoices to hear of Mrs. Fawcett's friends and hopes some time to meet them. He is glad, above all, that Mrs. Fawcett acquits him personally of the injustice which she condemns, for in his heart he feels, with Cromwell, that he would rather be unjust to a Christian than to an unbeliever, 'as the former has another world to solace him for the injustice of this, and the latter has not.'

Perhaps the most important visit paid to Stead at Holloway[2] was that of the *Pall Mall Gazette's* proprietor on November 14, and a letter which Mr. Yates Thompson wrote to him that same evening when he had returned home was of a nature to evoke much anxious thought. It was a considerately worded letter, though for Mr. Stead it was to be unpleasant reading. Having 'said all the worst' he had to say in the course of this interview in the prison, thus Mr. Yates Thompson begins, he will not 'answer formally' a note from the Old Bailey Dock, dated November 10, in which Stead had offered to resign the editorship of the *Pall Mall*. Mr. Thompson is not in the least disposed to accept the offer. 'I think it is nobody's interest, yours, mine, or the paper's, that I should do so,' he declares. 'What I ascertained to-day from you is that you entertain an even stronger sense than I do of the mistakes committed in connection with the Secret Commission. Whatever they may have been, however – and I demur completely to *your* expression of "a discredited journalist" (as also, I may say, does Mr. Cook) – they seem to me to have been attached to one special subject presenting the greatest difficulties of approach and in which *anybody* was safe to make mistakes.' All that was necessary was that Stead should now do what he (Yates Thompson) had before maintained to be absolutely essential – namely, get the paper '*out of the present groove*.' A 'short turn' was what the necessities of the *P.M.G.* imperatively demanded. Stead's friend, Mr. Benjamin Waugh, had been saying that this was impossible. 'I venture to believe the contrary. You told me you were ready to take this line last September. I believe you will take it, and take it successfully, in January or February next.' The letter proceeds to deal with practical matters, such as the arrangements made with the prison authorities for visits at certain stated hours by members of the *Pall Mall* staff, and ends with a very cordial message from Mrs. Yates Thompson – 'nothing,' she has bade him say, 'would delight her more than to do some commissions for you.'

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[1] Twenty years later he wrote, in *The Liberal Ministry of* 1906: 'The two men who most resemble Puritan pulpiteers in their zeal for righteousness and their stern enforcement of the moral law, John Morley and John Burns, are both Free-thinkers.' One is reminded of Jowett's remark, cited by Mrs. Asquith in her autobiography: 'There have been saints among infidels too, e.g. Hume and Spinoza.'

[2] Cecil Rhodes, happening to be in London towards the end of November and to hear for the first time about Stead's action and imprisonment, jumped impetuously into a hansom and drove out to Holloway. 'Here is the man I want,' he said to himself; 'one who not only has the right principles but is more anxious to promote them than to save his own skin.' But not being provided with a permit he failed to get admission. Stead knew nothing of this until he made Rhodes's acquaintance in April 1889.

Immediately after Mr. Yates Thompson's visit on November 14 – therefore before receiving this letter – Stead, in probably the 'deepest dumps' experienced during his imprisonment, wrote as follows to his devoted friend, Mrs. Bunting, wife of the editor of the *Contemporary Review*:

'I have had my worst half-hour just now, when discussing the policy of the *P.M.G.* with Mr. Thompson.

'He is all for a clean cut, a sharp turn, making the *P.M.G.* as other papers are; and I, discredited as I am by the breakdown of Jarrett and the verdict in the Armstrong case, can no longer take the high line I used to take.

'God will pull it through all right, but I think He will want two months' elbow room to do it in.

'That is the one dark point to me and it weighs upon me much more than prison.

'However, it is in God's hands, and if He cannot use me and the *P.M.G.* He will use some one else.'

Mr. Yates Thompson's ideas about the future of the *P.M.G.* and poor Rebecca Jarrett's breakdown in the witness-box were matters continually on Stead's mind, as we see from letters written to him by Mr. Bramwell Booth and others. 'Thompson is depressed; give him time,' Mr. Booth writes reassuringly. 'Let some of our side see him. You know how he was before this. We are bound to win in the end. We have got that Act and we will get more. . . . God lives!' And in the same note Mr. Booth strives to give comfort also in regard to the other trouble. 'I am equally responsible with you for your believing Jarrett,' he declares: (*a*) 'I told you you could believe her ; (*b*) I believed her myself and got in the boat with you; (*c*) I was willing to take the risk you took at the time on the strength of her word.' And he proceeds:

'Your reputation is at this very moment such as you never dreamed of its being. Your name is as well known as any living man's – and known in connection not with an old party cry and doctrine, but with the rising tide of a great new movement in the whole English-speaking population of the earth, in favour of right and purity and freedom. This Court, this Jury, cannot harm you in the end – the *worst* they can do is to make you a little harder fight.

'Don't talk about offering yourself up, GOD, I tell you, is above all this chatter. I have more to fear than you from the Attorney and the Judge. You have a House-top to answer from in the *P.M.G.*, and when all their lies are forgotten God's truth will go marching on.'

* * *

On Sunday, November 8 – the day after that on which the first jury had brought in their verdict of 'guilty ' – Stead, together with his wife, had attended morning service at the Congregational Church in Wimbledon to which they belonged. Even among fellow-members opinions as to his actions had been divided and the minister, Rev.

Walter C. Talbot, had shown some courage in the way in which he had handled matters on this occasion. While at Holloway, and subject to those moods of depression in which he magnified his mistakes and shortcomings, Stead must have derived very great comfort from a communication which Mr. Talbot had printed in a Wimbledon newspaper in order, as he said, 'to set the minds of many Christian people at rest.' A copy found its way, of course, to the prison. After alluding to the various criticisms and condemnations which had been passed on himself for his support of Stead, Mr. Talbot thus records the incident:

'On the 7th of October, at a special meeting duly called, Mr. Stead's position as a member of the Church was carefully, prayerfully, and freely discussed. The result was that the following resolution was not only unanimously, but enthusiastically, carried: "That this meeting desires to express its warmest sympathy with Mr. W. T. Stead in the trying position in which he has been placed owing to the Treasury prosecution; also to declare its fullest confidence in the purity of his motives in the course recently pursued by him; and to thank him for his God-fearing and courageous exposal of vice and crime in the interests of social morality." I was requested by the assembly to send a copy of that resolution to our brother, and also to write a letter of sympathy to Mrs. Stead, and I did both with all my heart. My people and I watched with intense and painful interest the progress of the trial at the Central Criminal Court. On Saturday, November 7, the first jury brought in their verdict of "Guilty." On the following day, Sunday, the 8th, Mr. and Mrs. Stead attended morning service at our church. I had prepared a short statement with reference to the case, which I read to the congregation. It was afterwards arranged that Mr. Stead should give an address at the close of the evening service, which on that account was shortened. My deacons, seven good men and true, heartily acquiesced in this arrangement. Opportunity was given to any who wished to retire immediately after the first service. Few did so, and all the available seats were quickly filled by new-comers. Mr. Stead first read with marvellous power the hymn commencing, "Art thou weary, art thou languid." This having been sung, our brother led us in prayer, offering a petition, simple, earnest, full of quiet power, in calm tones, which told me that, notwithstanding the dire conflict in earthly criminal courts, where he had been so terribly strained, in his soul was "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," given him from the highest court of heaven.'

Mr. Talbot proceeds to cite some passages from Stead's address, which began with an expression of gratitude to the members of the Church for their sympathy and support and of regret over the mistake which had led to his sentence of imprisonment:

'Standing here (Stead went on), I feel a penitent sinner, filled to the full with a conviction of my own stupidity and short-sightedness; and looking back, I feel that I could have done things better and things other, which would have saved a lot of trouble to me and to those who have been connected with me. I stand before you humiliated and abased, conscious that I have made mistakes and committed errors of judgment which I ought not to have done; yet, after all, I thank God for what I have been enabled to do. . . . After making in all earnestness and sincerity, this confession I must say that my predominant feeling is one of joy and of confident hopefulness as to the future. . . . Our very mistakes have led to a greater reverence for the purity of women, and, I hope also, for the purity of men. The verdict of yesterday has been flashed all over the world, and to-morrow morning English newspapers will comment upon it. Most of them will condemn me, but all will be obliged to face a problem which they would have thrust aside, but which they will now be compelled to consider. I do not know or much care what form the penalty will take, but I have this feeling that whatever it may be, this movement will receive a new stimulus, and more men and women will be made to think what they shall do to preserve the purity of our girls.'

The effect of the address, Mr. Talbot says, was that not women alone, but strong men, bowed themselves down and wept, and there was scarcely a dry eye when Mr. Stead finished. The communication ends thus :

'When I committed him and his fellow-prisoners, his wife and children, and the great cause of purity to God, responses deep and solemn came audibly from the assembly at the end of every sentence. And now I will ask the judgment of your readers. After listening to our brother's words, so expressive of penitent sorrow for the wrong he had done, of his deep humility of soul, of his grateful thanks to God for the good which he, the erring instrument, had been enabled to do, of his strong and noble faith in God, faith which would calmly leave the sacred cause and its suffering agents to divine guidance and care; after listening to such words, spoken with all the noble naturalness of an honest man, I ask you, could we condemn our brother? No. Our brother stumbled in a noble cause. Let who will magnify the stumbling, my people and I gave and still will give, our hearts and hands to him who stumbled, as we say with him, "God speed the cause." '

* * *

During Stead's trial the famous Spurgeon had been outspoken in his sympathy. There now came from him a cordial note full of admiration. 'Be of good cheer!' he wrote. 'In your retirement you will be able to buckle on your armour with supreme care and sacred vigil for the future fray in which we shall see you the equally stalwart, and still more skilful, champion. I wish joy to your heart and power to your arm.'

From Dr. Clifford – then, as always, one of his two or three closest and dearest friends – Stead received several very welcome letters. 'We are looking forward anxiously and hopefully,' declared Dr. Clifford in one of these, 'because we *really* need you to aid in pushing forward the great work of social purity. It is unspeakably difficult to magnetize the Christian Church into its right attitude to this, its most supreme work. Why men and women, acknowledging Christ as their Leader and Pattern, should be so profoundly and wickedly apathetic as to facts which roused His tenderest sympathies and holiest fervour, I cannot understand, but so it is. God has sent you to His Church for such a time as this, and our hopes are high and our hearts are ready.'

Among letters written by Stead himself which have been preserved by their receivers, the following to Cardinal Manning is one of the most noteworthy:

'HOLLOWAY PRISON,
December 1, 1885.

'MY LORD CARDINAL,

'I ought to have written to you long ago to thank you for the very kind letter which cheered me in the first dark days of my imprisonment.[1] My brother was permitted to read it to me, but I was not permitted to receive it then. Now at this prison I can receive any letters and write and do as I please, provided I do not go out of my cell excepting at exercise times and to Church.

'I am very happy, very comfortable, and very grateful for everything, but especially this imprisonment. I do my writing for the *P.M.G.* as usual. Much, I fear, to the disgust of my Liberal friends, who are still clinging to the forlorn hope of a Liberal victory. As I see no alternative but Home Rule or the Sword, I am glad Parnell and his Home Rulers are going to hold the whip-hand in the new House, and if the sword is going to be used I prefer it should be wielded by the Tories rather than by the Liberals.

'You will, I hope ,be pleased to hear that I think the *P.M.G.* will be – if I remain on it, as I expect to do – more in accord with your views on the Education question than it has been heretofore.

'On the question of the State Church, I have undertaken, as a congenial occupation for a criminal working out his sentence in gaol, the reform of the Established Church. My correspondence with Archbishops, Bishops, Cabinet Ministers, past and present, is extensive and most interesting. I am convinced that in the article, "Home Rule for the Church?" which you may have seen in the *P.M.G.*, I have hit upon a good formula that will do much to help those who wish to restore to the English Church some measure of self-government and to enable her to adjust her machinery to the times.

'You, of course, look at these things from a different standpoint, but we are *both* in one sense outside the Anglican Church, and yet from the point of view of the Establishment we are both members of the National Church. And I think I may say that while we both wish the Church to be other than what she is, we neither of us would hesitate to do all that we could to increase her power for good and to remove obstacles in the way of her efficiency and usefulness.

' That being so, and disestablishmentbeing out of the question, I am going for Home Rule for the Church, and the establishment of a real Church Parliament whose decisions, administrative and otherwise, shall have force of law, if, like provisional orders, they lie so many days on the table of Parliament without being vetoed. I shall be very glad to hear how this strikes you and, if you have a moment to spare, to have the benefit of your advice as an Englishman, an ex-Minister of the Anglican Church, and the Chief of the Catholic hierarchy in England, as to how best within possible limits to increase the usefulness of the Established Church.

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[1] Coldbath-in-the-Fields.

I am,
Your obedient servant,
(*Signed*) W. T. STEAD.'

'I was glad to receive your letter,' Cardinal Manning wrote in reply, 'and to see from the vigour of it that your health keeps up, for of your courage I had no fear or doubt. There can be no misgiving as to the work you have done, or the work you have begun: or of the effect of trial, sentence, and imprisonment. It will all stir up greater resolution, and add wisdom and caution in those who are working with you, and if it does not "stop the mouth of lions" it is only because nothing can: but it will pacify and disarm many good but feeble minds.' And proceeding to touch briefly on the question of the State Church, the Cardinal declares: 'We would do everything to take the Christianity of England up into the verity of perfect faith. We will do nothing to pull down, or mutilate or destroy. . . . I shall rejoice to see any work of good in the Anglican system: for I hold that the nearer a man is to God, the nearer he is to the Council of Trent.'

To Mr. Yates Thompson, Stead's articles upon the Church of England had come as a very welcome 'new feature' of the paper, and one which was calculated to emphasize the desired change of tone. 'Church Reform seems to me an excellent and safe thing to go for,' he wrote on November 22. 'If the movement succeeds, it reforms a great institution; if it fails, you will at all events in the effort have exposed the weak places of the Establishment and rendered its disestablishment or disendowment easier.'

From a big batch of letters on public affairs four call for citation by reason of the glimpses they give us at Stead's journalistic activities while at Holloway. The first is from the late Mr. G. W. E. Russell. He was in warm sympathy with Stead about many things, but evidently did not like his friend's attitude towards the Liberal party now. 'As you are not silenced,' Mr. Russell writes to him on November 19, in the ecclesiastical manner of which he was so fond, 'it becomes necessary that I should "use a holy boldness" with you, as my old Evangelical friends used to say, and tell you that the *P.M.G.* has not lately been "adorning the doctrine" – to use another phrase current in the same quarters. . . . What I have thought lamentable was the perpetual sneering at Mr. G., the violent abuse of Chamberlain and all of us who think at all with him, the denunciation of the party as having no faith – no cause – no principle – while all the time you make war on any principle we take up. What are we to do? What to profess? What to strive for? We seem wrong all round. Add to this the constant praise and encouragement of the Tories and you get a result which I cannot think just to us as a body or even consonant with your own real feelings. Forgive my plainness of speech.'

This was written on the eve of the General Election. An eloquent page from Mr. Winston Churchill's Life of his father will help us to realize the position of things in December of that year after the General Election was over. The Liberals had secured 333 seats, the Conservatives 271 and the Irish Nationalists 86. It looked as though Lord Salisbury's Government were inclined to make some large concession to Parnell – the Irish vote had gone in their favour in all English constituencies. Mr. Churchill has shown how Gladstone had until this moment been holding his hand:

' . . . on December 17, after ten days of whisperings and rumour, a public announcement of his Home Rule scheme, apparently authentic in character and circumstantial in detail, appeared simultaneously in Liberal and Conservative papers. Mr. Gladstone was prompt to repudiate, as a mere "speculation" upon his opinions, this premature and unfortunate disclosure. But the next day he was writing to Lord Hartington, who had asked for explanations, a frank and full account of his "opinions and ideas," which shows how closely newspaper assertion corresponded with the workings of his mind. The process by which his conversion was effected has been at length laid bare. His internal loathing of the Coercive measures he had been forced to impose during the last five years; his suspicion and entire misconception of the cold-blooded manœuvres by which his Government had been overturned; his hope of repairing, remoulding and consolidating the great party instrument which he had directed so long; the desire of an "old Parliamentary hand" to win the game; the dream of a sun-lit Ireland, loyal because it was free, prosperous and privileged because it was loyal – the crowning glory of an old man's life – all find their place in that immense decision. And then the whole mass of resolve, ponderously advancing, drawing into its movement all that learning and fancy could supply, gathering in its progress the growing momentum of enthusiasm, wrenching and razing all barriers from its path, was finally precipitated like an avalanche upon a startled world!'

Stead, like John Morley, had been a Home Ruler, out and out, for years, and he had no patience with the extremely cautious tactics which Gladstone had been employing – still less with the tone which Chamberlain had begun to adopt. In fact, Morley alone among Liberal leaders was speaking to his taste. 'I am glad you thought well of my remarks in the north,' Morley wrote to him at Christmas. 'Little fault has been found with them in any quarter. . . . But I feel sure we shall have a bitter struggle before any real move is made. The British public loathe the very notion of Home Rule. In short, my forecast is exactly that of R. B. B.[1] – whose words I am glad to have seen. We shall have to undergo eclipse – and perhaps extinction (not painless). By "we" I mean the Radicals, not the British Empire.'

Milner also wrote discussing the situation. 'I quite admit the personal score – not the first of the kind – which you have had in being ahead on the Home Rule question,' he says in a twelve-page epistle dated December 19. 'I agree with you too, in the main, about Home Rule. But you are not only positive about the principle of the Independent Parliament but positive about details, some of which seem to me to be fatal to your own scheme of settlement.' And he proceeds to combat some of Stead's ideas. 'To lose Ireland and keep the Irish members seems a rum ideal in any case,' he exclaims at one point in his argument, 'and I don't believe you will get even the docile Gladstonians to swallow it unless they have lost all their memory as well as all their sense and – well, they never had any principles!' Milner was just starting for a trip abroad, so his long letter – he added apologetically – asked for no reply.

The last of the four political communications is from Mr. Gladstone, in his own handwriting, dated December 18, 1885; it is one of the most interesting of all the numerous letters which Stead at one time or another received from him. Mr. Gladstone's feelings in regard to Stead must have been more than usually mingled just at this period, and very evidently the words of the letter were most carefully weighed. If conscience and conviction should bring the *P.M. Gazette* and himself upon the same lines at a critical moment, he would be very glad, he said. He looked to the Government for action. If such action required negotiation, he hoped the Government would not shrink from it. As for himself it is his duty, 'at the present moment to eschew both; but to think, and think and think.' Except what he had publicly spoken and written, all ideas ascribed to him were in truth 'other people's opinions' of his opinions, 'as the colours of the rainbow are in us, not in it.' And Mr. Stead was right in thinking 'I should disown the *veto* imputed to me.'

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[1] Mr. Reginald B. Brett. Two and a half months later Stead was to make the following entry in a Diary which he kept for a few weeks: 'March 8. Went on to Brett's. Brett says Gladstone's Home Rule Scheme very nearly elaborated and that there is to be a Parliament in Dublin – knew the exact phrase it would go by, but did not like to tell me. Thought Chamberlain must leave the Cabinet: Mr. Gladstone has led him to believe that there is nothing decided upon. The Grand Old Man's tactical skill marvellous – almost too smart.'

Stead's thoughts and words and deeds in relation to Ireland and Home Rule will be one of the principal themes of our next chapter. Here we must confine ourselves to his Letter-Bag, the multiform contents of which would serve to fill many more pages were space available.

A letter from Mr. Yates Thompson, dated December 12, indicates that the worst of his proprietorial troubles are over. With the invaluable help of the eminent solicitor, Sir George Lewis,[1] certain dangers which had been still impending in connection with the Armstrongs and the Broughtons have been averted: the *Pall Mall* General Election 'Extra,' 'Mems About Members,' – E. T. Cook's work chiefly – has made a hit; and the advertisers who had been frightened away have begun to recover themselves. 'I think the publishers are getting over their scare. Macmillan and one or two more have come in. The Theatre and the West End tradesmen hold out still. But Charles is now alluring Irving by giving two and a half pages to him on Monday with profuse illustrations.'

The said 'Charles' (Mr. Charles Morley, by this time editor of the *Pall Mall Budget*, wherein all the most important items were reprinted, in modified form, from the *Gazette*) was throughout these Holloway weeks doing his utmost to win back the general public, and in the process was becoming the *bête noire* of Stead's – shall I say, less broadminded? – associates. 'A true conception of you can never be formed,' Stead was warned by one of these in January 1885, 'while you have a man like Charles Morley playing the part he does.' Occasionally Stead himself must have been a bit embarrassed, one has to admit, by Charles Morley's tastes in things theatrical, as for example his unashamed relish for the unforgettable Nellie Farren and her companions in tights! But if the pen-and-ink illustrations and the cheerful records of such vanities were a trifle incongruous with Stead's journalistic ideals, they were on the whole very harmless. I am sure that the Rev. Stewart Headlam, one of Stead's champions, was seldom among the censors of that wily and worldly Charles.

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[1] From this time onwards one of Stead's warmest admirers and friends.

A letter from Mr. Henry Leslie, the *P.M.G.'s* Manager, dated January 7, brings us within hail of the end of Stead's imprisonment. Mr. Leslie has been interviewing publishers with reference to a big book on the subject of the 'New Crusade' (including the Maiden Tribute of course) at which Stead has been working and which now approaches completion. But all the ordinary firms are afraid of it. So are the wholesale houses who sell only to the trade. Leslie will now try the firms that devote themselves to religious publications, but he will be surprised 'if any of these crotchety gentlemen' should welcome such a volume. . . . Eventually they also refused, and all that saw the light was a short section, issued separately, wherein Stead has recorded the life-work of Mrs. Josephine Butler.

Mr. Leslie's next communication is of a more encouraging kind. Every one at the office, E. T. Cook included, is keenly appreciative of the articles entitled 'My First Imprisonment,' which are to appear shortly in the *Pall Mall*, and Leslie himself – never given to 'gush' – is unwontedly enthusiastic over an essay in which Stead has set forth his ideas as to 'Government by Journalism' for the *Contemporary Review*.

Mr. Yates Thompson, also, has again some pleasant things to say: 'Your Home Rule attitude has been most judicious and certainly starts us well for the Session,' he writes on January 12. A fellow Director of Mr. Thompson's, on the Board of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, has been full of admiration of Stead's leaders on the Irish question. 'As he had entirely stopped reading us after the Armstrong revelations this is a satisfactory symptom.'

Poor Stead! Even the pleasant things that Mr. Yates Thompson could say to him now were not calculated to soothe. The painful truth remained that the man who paid the piper was now to be free to call the tune – at all events to a much greater extent than the idealistic and very self-willed piper had until then permitted! This letter of January 12 drew forth next day a long and elaborate reply in which Stead first summarizes the financial position of the *Pall Mall*, as affected by the Maiden Tribute revelations and their costly sequels, and then expounds his feelings and hopes for the immediate future. It is a rather pathetically chastened production and must have cost him a good deal to write. Vanished for the moment is his mood of triumph and elation! Now he is faced with the necessity of trimming his sails as far as his conscience and temperament will permit. '*The Pall Mall* is to be,' he writes, 'what the *Pall Mall* was before July. We never boycotted any subject then, and we shall not now. But we are not going Maiden Tributing galore any more. It is to be the old *Pall Mall*.' And he encloses a proof of an article in which he develops all this in detail and which was to be duly printed in the paper on January 18, under the title 'Mr. Stead's Release.'

The concluding sentences of the letter show how seriously Stead has taken to heart Mr. Yates Thompson's monetary anxieties over the whole episode. It is the first occasion in his life, he declares, that he has had to write to anyone who has suffered for trusting in him. 'It would overwhelm me if I did not firmly believe that it is but for a time, and that by this time next year you will feel that you have not trusted me in vain.'

On January 18, as we know, the prison doors opened, and Stead, again full of courage and confidence, resumed the helm.

CHAPTER 11

SOME EPISODES OF THE YEAR 1886

I

THE FIRST HOME RULE BILL

In his interesting little volume, *The Two Irish Nations*, Mr. W. F. Monypenny spoke of the year 1886 as 'the heroic epoch of modern English politics.' It was the year of the great fight over the first Home Rule Bill, and the Parliamentary Leaders – Gladstone, Parnell, and Morley, on the one side, Salisbury, Hartington, Chamberlain and Lord Randolph Churchill on the other – must certainly have looked back on it as one of the most memorable years in their lives. It was a memorable year, also, in the life of Stead.

Regret has often been expressed that the late Sir E. T. Cook did not write Stead's biography: he himself, as he once told me in a letter, was fascinated by the subject; but he felt, I think, that his disagreement with his former chief over the South African War and sundry other matters disqualified him for the task. Perhaps that was so, but what a pity it is we have not at least Cook's personal record of those great conflicts in the 'Eighties in which Stead took so prominent a part – of the struggle over Home Rule, above all! There is nobody now living so well fitted to deal with this period of Stead's career. As Stead's first lieutenant, Cook was in the thick of the fray. He knew all the principal combatants and dealt some vigorous blows himself. And he kept a level head from first to last. A detailed history of that year, 1886, from his pen would have been invaluable.

One would like especially to know what degree of prominence Cook, looking back on events after a quarter of a century, would have given Stead in the picture. Historians of modern England devote an abundance of space always to Cabinet Ministers, but Stead is seldom mentioned by them. Nor does his name occur often in official biographies or in autobiographies, not even in those of Liberal leaders who were in constant touch with him and who were indebted to him often for both inspiration and support. They put one in mind sometimes, just a little, of that eminent Whig nobleman, the Earl of Loam, in Barrie's masterpiece. The Earl of Loam, it will be remembered, when he came to publish *his* book, paid a generous tribute to Crichton in a footnote.

E. T. Cook would, I imagine, have held the balance more fairly between the great parliamentarians and the great journalist. He was keenly alive to Stead's blemishes and shortcomings – perhaps oversensitive to them; certainly more sensitive to them, I think, than Milner ever was, and his appreciation of Stead was never so whole-hearted as Milner's. But he recognized his chief's wonderful gifts, and he had an unequalled opportunity of noting how they were used, and with what result. One fancies that his testimony might have been to the effect that – whether wisely or unwisely, whether to Ireland's benefit or misfortune – it was Stead's voice that counted for most in the summer of 1886. John Bright's defection, Lord Hartington's stone-wall resistance, Chamberlain's manœuvring and wire-pulling, Lord Randolph Churchill's onslaughts of mordant wit, were all potent factors; one suspects, however, that Gladstone might have been 'too many' for the foe in front of him had it not been for the implacable ally on his flank.

That is the view to which E. T. Cook's own biographer, Mr. Saxon Mills, though he expresses himself guardedly, seems to incline. At least he allows his readers to infer that Mr. Gladstone's compromise over Clause 24 of his Home Rule Bill – the clause excluding the Irish Members from Westminster – was wrung from him mainly, if not entirely, by Stead's articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The three pages which Mr. Saxon Mills devotes to the subject make a very compact and adequate summary, but they are tantalizing in their suggestions of what Cook himself, with all his 'inside knowledge,' his keen appreciation of character and his skill as an historian, would have been able to tell us.

Had Gladstone's compromise been made when Stead issued his first warnings[1] instead of being yielded after months of damaging argument, festering irritation, and dissension, within the ranks of the Party, the Liberals might surely have made a very much better show when the Bill came up for its Second Reading on June 8.

Writing in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on June 7, the eve of the debate, Stead had appealed to all Liberals to support the Bill.

'The fundamental error of the Home Rule Bill (he wrote) was the exclusion of the Irish Members from the House of Commons. This made all the difference between a Home Rule Bill that binds the Empire together and a Home Rule Bill that is the thin end of the wedge that splits it. . . . But Ministers recognized their blunder.

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[1] A letter from Milner to Stead dated April 12, 1886, contains a passage which is worth noting in this connection. 'So, after all, you are going to make the Old Parliamentary Hand drop the only redeeming feature of his rotten Bill! Not approving, I cannot but admire!'

'The Irish Members have an indefeasible right to sit in the House of Commons whenever Imperial questions and questions of taxation are under discussion – that is to say, practically, that they are never to be excluded at all; the Bill is to be withdrawn in order to be recast in accordance with this fundamental and organic change, and Mr. Gladstone will to-night assure the House that the vote on the second reading of the Bill will simply and solely be a vote for the abstract principle of Home Rule. Under these circumstances the duty of every member who accepts the principle of Home Rule is plain and unmistakable. He must vote for the second reading, secure the principle of Home Rule, and then direct all his energies in the next few months to render it impossible for the Ministry to propose again the wrong kind of Home Rule.'

But the Bill was not to be saved now. There was a majority of thirty against it, and next day Gladstone's Cabinet decided to appeal to the country.

II

STEAD AND CHAMBERLAIN

Neither at this period nor at any other was persuasiveness Stead's forte in controversy. He had almost nothing of what some one described as Morley's gift of 'peaceful penetration' when setting forth a case. He could produce the most cogent arguments, supported by the most effective illustrations; he was extraordinarily vigorous in attack and resourceful in defence. He encouraged his own side magnificently. But if he won over a good many doubters by instilling into them his own strong convictions, a good many others were alienated by his violence and his dogmatism. As for definite opponents, as a rule he merely 'put their backs up.' It may be frankly admitted, therefore, that he was apt at all times to be a terrible thorn in the side of his not less courageous, but infinitely more circumspect, parliamentary leader. Mr. Gladstone must often have regarded him as a quite intolerable nuisance! One can almost imagine the soliloquy – 'Will no one rid me of this pestilent press-man ? '

An outspoken rebuke from Mr. Reginald Brett, dated May 15, 1886, and addressed formally to the *P.M.G.*, but enclosed in one of his ever friendly personal notes to Stead, is significant of the attitude of more detached critics. Mr. Brett protests against the way in which Stead attacks those Liberals, and especially Chamberlain, who do not see eye to eye with him. Stead, he complains, is needlessly accentuating the differences between their leaders, especially when imputing evil motives to them. The *P.M.G.* has been attributing Chamberlain's attitude to an 'intensity of animosity' against Mr. Gladstone, but if it be a fact that such a feeling exists in Mr. Chamberlain's mind – and Mr. Brett declares roundly that Stead has been going upon 'mere rumours and tittle-tattle' – surely 'it does not differ much from the sentiments which apparently animate the leading articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* when alluding to Mr. Chamberlain.' Presumably Stead's own opinions depend in no way upon his preferences or dislikes regarding individuals, and 'if Mr. Chamberlain finds it his duty to oppose the Government Bills, no public object can be gained by questioning his motives, rather than replying to his arguments.' And Mr. Brett proceeds to maintain that hitherto Stead has failed to recognize the real points of difference between Chamberlain and himself. The letter proceeds:

'You seem to believe that clause 24 is not vital to the scheme, but that its excision is absolutely necessary.

'Your contention appears to be that *minus* that clause the Government of Ireland Bill is good enough, and could be passed into Law.

'As I understand Mr. Chamberlain's position, it is this: that clause 24 is a symbol of the vital essence of the scheme; that upon it the whole structure of the two Bills is raised; and that if you strike it out, the scheme necessarily crumbles away, and requires rebuilding upon new and stronger foundations. This view was elaborated by Henry James, and is obviously shared by Lord Hartington.

'If you have a sincere desire to strengthen Mr. Gladstone, no surer means of doing so present themselves, than replying in detail to the arguments which have been used upon this point, and by showing clearly how the Law would stand in regard to the relations of England and Ireland, and to the separate or joint jurisdiction of the Imperial and Statutory Parliaments, if Mr. Gladstone were to be able to induce his colleagues to abandon clause 24, and to adhere to the other provisions of his two Bills.

'If you can do this, you will render a service both to the "leader of the great Demos," and to "Demos" itself – by extricating them from a position of complexity and extreme discomfort.'

Stead seems to have taken these words to heart, for he was at greater pains to prove his theories in convincing in subsequent *P.M.G.* articles, both while the Bill was before the House and in the ensuing weeks of the General Election.

III

A STEAD 'CATECHISM'

A Life of Stead without an extract or two from one of his political 'Catechisms' would be like the play of 'Hamlet' without a soliloquy. I shall give here some of the questions and answers from the 'Elector's Catechism,' entitled *For Home and Gladstone*, which Stead issued in June 1886. They will be new to that vast majority of my readers who, like myself, were too young at this date to excite themselves about politics.

Issued at a penny – 'One Hundred, 6*s*.; One Thousand, £2 10*s*.; Five Thousand, £10 10*s*.; Carriage free' – this *Pall Mall Gazette* 'Extra' must have had an enormous circulation; and it was cited by public speakers innumerable, from Mr. Gladstone downwards. It must have been far and away the most effective electioneering pamphlet on the Home Rule side.

Gladstone's opponents, it should be remembered, were eager to make his Bill, with all its shortcomings, the crux of the General Election. Gladstone himself and his chief supporters were determined that the Election should turn upon the whole principle of Home Rule.

'What we ask and expect,' Gladstone had declared at Midlothian on June 18, 'is that a Ministerialist shall, knowing the meaning of his words and not using feints and screens and stratagems in order to escape from them, *give Ireland the real effective control over her own local affairs*. If he is ready to do that, he is a good Ministerial Candidate; and if he pledges himself to do that, let him speak by the hour and by the yard, if he likes, against the defects and the weaknesses and the follies of the Ministerial Bill. . . . He who accepts our policy and the principle is our brother-in-arms.'

The skill and ingenuity with which Stead deals with every imaginable aspect of the problem in his 171 Questions and Answers make the pamphlet quite lively reading even now. These few specimens will have a topical, as well as a biographical, interest to-day.

Having answered his first question, 'Why are you in favour of Home Rule?' with the words: 'Because I wish to secure two objects: (1) the maintenance of the integrity of the Empire, and (2) Government by the consent of the Governed'; and having dealt with a score of other enquiries arising out of this, he proceeds:

'26. But does not Mr. Gladstone propose to exclude the Irish members? He did, but he does not. At first, believing that the House of Commons would never consent to give Home Rule to Ireland without a *quid pro quo* in the shape of ridding itself of the Irish members, he proposed in his original draft to banish Irish members from Westminster. But that scheme is abandoned.

'27. What were the objections which led Mr. Gladstone to abandon it? There were several. To exclude the Irish members repealed the Union, and converted Home Rule into separation. It disenfranchised Ireland of the Empire, diminished the taxable area of the Queen's realm and degraded Ireland to the position of a tributary dependency. It also struck a fatal blow at the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament sovereignty, although nominally absolute and inalienable, depends for its moral force and effective strength upon its representative character.

'28. Was the scheme of exclusion definitely abandoned? In terms, no; in substance, yes. Clause 24, which banished the Irish members, was not withdrawn, but it was to be reconstructed. The Irish members were to be banished, and then they were to be brought back again. Their exclusion became a mere form, for it was expressly declared that they had to have a continuous and continuing right to be present, to debate and to vote on all questions of taxation and on all subjects of Imperial interests not delegated to the Statutory Parliament at Dublin.

'29. But is it not an anomaly that the Irish should have a Parliament of their own and still be fully represented in our Parliament?

'Not in the least. London, which has nearly as large a population as Ireland, will soon obtain Home Rule and a Statutory Parliament in the shape of a new municipality. But no one on that account will propose to banish the members for London from the Imperial Parliament.

'30. Then will not English and Scotch affairs be meddled with by Irishmen when English and Scotchmen cannot meddle with Irish affairs?

'Yes and no. English and Scotch members by the veto of the Crown can meddle in Irish affairs, but in the majority of cases they will have no wish to do so. Neither will Irish members care for the most part to meddle with exclusively English and Scotch affairs. But they will retain the right to interfere, which belongs to all members of the Imperial Legislature.'

Then, having summarized in a long succession of clear-cut phrases Ireland's reasons for demanding self-government, he asks:

'47. Why should Englishmen want Home Rule to be given to Ireland? (1) To steady the Irish leaders with the weight of responsibility; (2) to get rid of the nuisance of legislating on subjects on which we are imperfectly informed and but little interested; and (3) to secure a little time to attend to our own business, by removing the Irish block from the Parliamentary machine.

'48. What do you mean by steadying the Irish leaders with the weight of responsibility?

'At present the Irish popular leaders have power without responsibility, and they devote their energy, which is immense, and their ability, which is unquestioned, to the task of rendering it impossible for the people to govern. These smart fellows must put their own shoulders to the wheel and be saddled with the duty of governing their own country.'

And here, after a dozen pages packed full of telling facts, apt quotations and cogent arguments, is the conclusion:

'166. Are the Parnellites not subsidized by the Irish in America?

'Very largely, and the fact is an argument in favour of removing the grievances which make the Irish beyond the sea feel that the best service they can render their country is to subsidize the men who are carrying on the campaign against the legislative union.

'167. But how can you trust men who are more loyal to their foreign paymasters than to the Queen?

'Macaulay answered that question when demanding the emancipation of the Jews:

'"If there be any proposition universally true in politics it is this, that foreign attachments are the fruit of domestic misrule. It has always been the trick of bigots to make their subjects miserable at home, and then to complain that they look for relief abroad; to divide society, and then to wonder that it is not united; to govern as if a section of the State were the whole, and to censure the other sections of the State for their want of patriotic spirit. If the Jews (Irish) have not felt towards England like children, it is because she has treated them like a step-mother. There is no feeling which more certainly develops itself in the minds of men living under tolerably good Government than the feeling of patriotism. Since the beginning of the world there never was any nation, not cruelly oppressed, which was wholly destitute of that feeling."

'168. Is there any illustration of this universal proposition?

'Multitudes. Take two. The Italian Nationalists looked to France for support against the Bourbons. Italian patriotism is now violently anti-French. Bulgarians were subsidized by Russia, but the first act of the new Bulgaria has been to defy Russia, expel the Russian officers and strike out a course of her own.

'169. But would anything short of Separation satisfy the American Irish?

'Home Rule as in America would content the American Irish who subscribe. It would not satisfy the dynamitards, who bluster, and who get paid, but they would find in Mr. Parnell a far sterner foe than the English Government.

'170. Have not the Parnellites said that they want to sever the last link?

'In a fierce agitation, when men are fighting for their lives, with the prison constantly before them, they say many things which in their sober senses they would not stand to. From Mr. Parnell downwards they have solemnly and publicly repudiated all such doctrines.

'171. But is not their repudiation a mere blind?

'It does not matter much whether it is or not. The facts of the situation are such that no responsible ruler of Ireland can be a Separatist who is not also a maniac. Ireland is indissolubly connected with Great Britain, and no one will appreciate that more keenly than the men who are made responsible for the maintenance of law, order and prosperity in Ireland.'

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The story of the General Election of 1886 need not be told here. Gladstone and his supporters were defeated by a majority of 118 and the Liberal Party went out into the wilderness for an almost unbroken period of twenty years.

IV

THE REPEAL OF THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACT

Although from April to the end of July Stead's best energies were given to Irish affairs, which were absorbing to him throughout the year and which, as we shall see, were to monopolize him again in the winter, he managed, as was his wont, to find time for a hundred other interests. Of these, one was of surpassing importance in his own eyes – more important even than the cause of Ireland. This was the repeal in March of the Contagious Diseases Act, a matter so negligible from the standpoint of the normal politician that it finds no mention at all in Lord Morley's *Life of Gladstone*. It is almost as dreadful a subject as the horrors dealt with in the 'Maiden Tribute' Crusade, but in the long-sustained movement for the abolition of the C.D. Acts as they were called, the leaders were Mrs. Josephine Butler and Mr. (later Sir) James Stansfield, and Stead's rôle was merely that of a most strenuous and courageous supporter: the story of it belongs to their biographies rather than to his. Here it will be enough to cite a few passages from the *Pall Mall Gazette* in which Stead exultingly records the triumph of the cause. It should be explained that the main feature of the Acts in question, which were passed in 1865, 1867 and 1868 for about twenty seaport and military towns were: (1) the registration and police supervision of prostitutes; (2) the periodical examination of these women; (3) their detention in hospital when considered desirable.

I shall give first a few sentences from a leading article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* for March 10, in which the previous history of the matter is outlined:

'The existence of these laws is a painful illustration of the facility with which wrong can be committed, and the difficulty with which redress can be secured. The C.D. Acts were passed silently, almost surreptitiously, through a House of Commons which was content to believe that a measure vouched for by Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues would not be immoral or unconstitutional. Fifteen years ago a Royal Commission recommended the repeal of the clauses subjecting women to compulsory examination, but until 1883 that examination continued in full force, and even now the Acts might be enforced to-morrow by a word from Downing Street. Fifteen years is a long time to wait for the removal of legalized outrage, even although the sufferers have no votes.'

Failing the franchise, Stead goes on to say there was no means of securing the attention of Parliament apart from the newspaper sensationalism and dynamite; and women, especially Englishwomen, shrank from the use of dynamite, while the newspapers shrank 'with prurient prudory' from 'so scabrous a subject' as the C.D. Acts. So there was nothing left to the unfortunate victims of the Acts but to suffer. He ends the passage with a bitter taunt: 'Such a conclusion is little creditable to the chivalry of our legislators. But men who never could be induced to bestir themselves to protect innocent girls of thirteen from nameless outrage until last July, cannot be expected to be keenly sensitive to the wrongs of women who are neither young nor innocent.'

The *Pall Mall Gazette* of the following day contains the report of a speech made by Stead at a public meeting in favour of the repeal of the Acts in which, not for the first time, he appealed personally to the Prime Minister. 'Woe be to Mr. Gladstone,' he cried, 'if he ends his career without having wiped off the Statute Book of England an infamous Act which was placed upon it during his administration!'

The report of the speech proceeds—

'He would tell Mr. Gladstone straight that those who followed him most faithfully and recognized most fully the splendid services which he had rendered his country, had seen with shame and confusion of face his indifference on this subject. He had not the excuse which other men had. No one could say that Mr. Gladstone knew nothing of the sorrows, the wrongs, and the tragic histories of the outcasts of our streets. To his honour be it spoken, he had never been warmly interested in the welfare of individuals, but to that of the class he seemed indifferent. Before he went down to his grave Mr. Gladstone had better drop the C.D. Acts, or he might have to stand before the judgment seat of the Eternal carrying those Acts in his hand as his contribution to the honour of English Womanhood.'

The Debate took place on March 16 and Mr. Stansfeld won an easy victory. He spoke for twenty minutes with dramatic fervour. Mr. Campbell-Bannerman,[1] Secretary of State for War, followed on behalf of the Government. The Government would support Mr. Stansfeld's motion 'as a matter of course,' thus the fate of the measure was sealed within the first half-hour.

In a leading article on March 17 Stead thus gives vent to his feelings of relief and delight:

'The House of Commons last night carried unanimously a resolution to the effect that the Contagious Diseases Acts ought to be repealed. No attempt was made by the friends of these mischievous measures to defend their essential and most hateful feature. . . . It was the registration of a great victory gained by one true woman's noble protest against the serried ranks of the officials, professional and journalistic supporters of a great crime.

'The debate, although brief, showed at every turn the great stride which public opinion has taken on this subject since the question was last before Parliament. Speaker after speaker admitted that public opinion was so hostile to the Acts that, as the Secretary of State for War declared, "It was impossible that any Government or any House of Commons should revive the compulsory examination." . . . Mrs. Butler has triumphed all along the line, and this great achievement has been won, not merely without any help from the Press, but in face of persistent conspiracy of silence, broken only now and then by outbursts of scandalous abuse. The House of Commons is far in advance of the journalists on this question. Seldom has such a great moral and political advance been won in our time in which the Press has played so contemptible a rôle, or one in which it is hard to say whether impotence or malignity was most painfully conspicuous.'

V

SOME LETTERS TO STEAD. A HOLIDAY IN SWITZERLAND

Among other important incidents in 1886 in which Stead took a hand, or on which he expressed himself with vigour and to some purpose, were the Trafalgar Square meetings of February 8, when Mr. Hyndman and Mr. John Burns were the heroes; the Woman's

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[1] Afterwards Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

Suffrage Bill read a second time in a half-empty House of Commons on February 19; Sir Charles Dilke's appearance in the Divorce Court – but the Dilke affair belongs to another chapter; the Mansion House Committee on Unemployment; the doings in Burmah, Abyssinia and Uganda; and, last but not least, Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation – the great political excitement of the close of the year.

Stead's share in these events, whether as actor or as critic, and his relations with the prime movers in them are full of interest, but space is lacking for their discussion here. The few pages which follow will be better used if I devote them to another glance at Stead's correspondence. Presently – when we reach the 'Nineties – I shall be able to draw at will from the letters which Stead himself wrote. In 1886, as in the earlier and later 'Eighties, we have to be content, for the most part, with letters which he received.

Not many written communications of any particular interest or importance seem to have passed between Stead and his assistant editor in 1886. Of all those which have been preserved only one seems to me worth quoting from – a long letter from Cook, written early in January, while Stead was still at Holloway. It is chiefly concerned with the *P.M.G.'s* immediate future and the line to be taken in regard to such scandals as had been the sensation of 1885. Stead had been contemplating some kind of complete record of the 'Maiden Tribute' episode; Cook was anxious, now the Criminal Law Amendment Bill had been passed, the crusade triumphantly ended, and the Crusader about to become a free man again, that the whole dreadful story should be allowed to pass into oblivion for a while at least, and the paper to resume its normal aspect. Stead eventually acquiesced.

'You know how entirely I was with you as to the "M.T." originally,' Cook writes, 'but with regard to a second edition I cannot see the *public service* which would justify you. When I first saw Brett[1] after this business, he said – "Yes, Stead has done good in the matter, I don't deny that; but then we want him for other things and he has weakened his power of doing good in them." I disagreed with him then, but I should be afraid of his words becoming true if you now re-opened the whole question.'

An amusing postscript follows with reference to the *P.M.G.'s* biographical guide to the new house of Commons, 'Mems About Members,' which Cook had just edited. Some provincial newspapers had remarked: 'We have read it through carefully and can assure our readers that it may safely be left in the hands of the young.'

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[1] Mr. Reginald B. Brett, so often mentioned already.

Not unnaturally the *P.M.G.* itself was at this period, and remained for long afterwards, a source of anxiety to parents. Even among those who had applauded Stead's action there were very many who ceased to take the paper home. Many people, like John Bright (whose emphatic autograph letter on the subject has been kept), had already cancelled their subscription.

A letter from Dr. Clifford, dated July 9, 1886, recalls a noteworthy series of signed articles which Stead initiated in 1884 and which were now reprinted in the form of a *Pall Mall Gazette* 'Extra':

'MY DEAR MR. STEAD,

'Unavoidable work has prevented me from replying to your letter earlier. Thanks for your "Spiritual Centres" and chiefly for your refreshing and stimulating introduction. You are not "a heathen man and a publican," but a N.T. Christian, caring more for the essence and working energy of Christianity than for its forms and ritual. I not only endorse your ideas and principles, but I can truly say I have striven for years to embody them in the activities of the Church of which I am pastor. Some of your expressions I should not use; but your dominant ideas lie at the basis of our fellowship, which is "exceeding broad." Love and loyalty to the Spirit of Christ is the one all-inclusive condition of membership.

'In my speech on the "New Democracy and the Christian Church" at the City Temple I advocated a policy of similar breadth and inwardness. Instead of being far from the Kingdom of Heaven I think you are in it and near the centre. In that I rejoice.

'One word about the *P.M.G.* Why have you admitted "Sectarianism" into your Saturday issue? The *Daily News* has beguiled you and you have fallen into the snare of classifying the Sunday preachers according to their denominations, thus giving the public infinitely more denominationalism on the Saturday and in the Press than they have on the Sunday and from the pulpits. Do eliminate this obnoxious element! Any principle of classification is better than that which emphasizes the points in which we are supposed to differ. Forgive my frankness. I have an ineffable hatred of this Saturday Sectarianism.

Ever sincerely yours,
(*Signed*) J. CLIFFORD.'

A letter, dated August 12, from Mr. Henry Leslie, the Manager of the *Pall Mall*, takes us away from London and public affairs to Switzerland and holiday-making. The first fortnight or so of Stead's holiday, indeed, this year, seems rather to have been in the nature of a much needed rest cure, for he had greatly over-exerted himself in July and had broken down. Mr. Leslie writes to him most sympathetically, but yearning a little for a share of the sunshine and quiet which have already begun to restore his strength. Two sentences serve to remind us of Stead's never-failing tenderness towards the unfortunate and disreputable. 'Carroty Kate,' we read, 'turned up here to-day decently clad and in full possession of her senses. I communicated with Mr. Bramwell Booth. . . . I have had two letters from — this month, cadging. But I am not going to spoil your holiday by sending them on to you.'

Stead's friends, the Buntings, were in Switzerland at this time and he was able to meet them. Miss E. M. Bunting has kindly furnished me with some particulars of his visit prefacing them with one or two other very interesting memories:

'It is curious (Miss Bunting writes me) there is not more correspondence. At one period after Mr. Stead's imprisonment, my aunt, Mrs. Sheldon Amos, used to attend at his office daily in the effort to help Mr. Stead with all the forlorn and queer women who took their troubles to him. She came in nightly to our house when we had gone to bed, to discuss their difficult cases with my parents, and I have vague memories of all sorts of sad stories and strange characters and even of my aunt's journeys abroad to investigate their affairs. Nothing of this has been kept.

'In 1886, after his release, Mr. Stead had a summer holiday abroad, and he spent a few days with us and the Amos's at a big old convent farmhouse near Freiburg in the Black Forest.

'Besides the parents we were a large party of young people in our early teens and Mr. Stead rollicked with us like a schoolboy; he induced my father to play cricket among other things. We went long walks and stirred up each village with laughter and pranks as we passed through. One quiet German lady driving along in her carriage was much astonished to have a dusty individual in brown tweeds insist on getting in and sitting beside her. But in a few minutes she was laughing heartily and thoroughly enjoying the liveliest Englishman she might ever hope to meet!'

VI

STEAD'S FIRST VISIT TO IRELAND

The severe depression in agriculture in 1886 made the question of the hour in Ireland not that of Home Rule, but that of Rent. Irish rents which has been fixed as 'fair' by the Land Courts two years previously, were being voluntarily lowered by some landlords. To what extent should the lowering be made compulsory for the others? This was the question into which Stead, eliminating political and social considerations as far as possible and dealing with it purely from an economic point of view, set out to inquire. It is all ancient history now, and nobody will want to be reminded in detail of the results of Stead's investigation, as recorded in the *Pall Mall*, and eventually reprinted in a 64-page Extra entitled *No Reduction: No Rent*. The greater portion of this 'Extra' consists of facts and figures, but there are some striking pages in one section of it, 'The Story of the Woodford Evictions' – memorable descriptions of Irish sights and scenes, vivid character-sketches of landlords and land agents, of politicians and parish priests, of sub-sheriffs and police officers. Woodford was a village on the notorious Clanricarde estate – 'one of the most English-looking villages,' Stead describes it, 'in all Ireland.' Lord Clanricarde, many readers will remember, was reputed the most callous of all the Irish 'Absentee Landlords' of that time – an eccentric, mysterious, sinister figure, extraordinarily ill-dressed, to be seen sometimes moving furtively along Piccadilly and St. James's Street, between his rooms at the Albany and his club. A strange contrast to his predecessor, who had been a landlord of the old type and a great power locally, and of whom it used to be said that he could return his grey mare as M.P. for Galway if he pleased! 'Masterful, overbearing, passionate, self-indulgent,' Stead heard the dead Marquis described by his former neighbours and tenants. 'Still, with all his vices, he was not detested.'

It was at Woodford, on October 17, 1886, immediately after the evictions, that Mr. John Dillon and Mr. William O'Brien laid the foundation of the 'Plan of Campaign' in accordance with which the land war was to be fought out that winter. Stead was present at the mass meeting at which the two Irish leaders set forth their scheme. Dillon had already been in gaol once, and Stead, noting his emaciated face and figure and reflecting on the almost intolerable strain to which he was being put by his work as agitator, felt that it would be a good thing if the Government were to imprison him again – 'they might save his life while strengthening his cause.' O'Brien reminded Stead of Carlyle's description of Marat, 'acrid and corrosive as the spirit of sloes and copperas.'

The pamphlet closes with the full text of the 'Plan' and an interview with Dr. Walsh, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, who gives it his approval.[1] Stead's own view of the whole matter is emphatically expressed. The tenants throughout Ireland were justified, he maintains, in refusing to pay more than 80 per cent. of their rent. Public opinion, therefore, must veto the employment of the public revenue and of the forces of the Crown in evicting those tenants whose landlords had not made a reduction of at least 20 per cent. 'The Government no doubt may be driven,' he says, 'to place sheriffs and constables and soldiery at the disposal of the Shylocks of Ireland. But there is not a man who will be employed in the service, from the Chief Secretary down to the ordinary constable, who will not be heartily glad if the tenants, by steady, fearless, passive resistance, can compel the bad landlords to do what the good landlords have done already.'

Stead established very friendly relations while in Ireland with both Archbishop Walsh and Archbishop Croke, and he got into close touch with the Parliamentary leaders. A cordial letter from Mr. William O'Brien bears witness to the gratitude he won from them and their recognition of his wonderful insight into the situation. 'Your writings,' Mr. O'Brien declared, 'are a tower of strength, and though, of course, we can't agree with you in everything nor expect you to agree with us, we all appreciate what an advantage your visits have conferred upon our cause, and we will not readily forget your courage and penetration.'

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[1] But not in terms sufficiently explicit for some of its supporters. 'Dr. Walsh's defence was, I think, bad and sophistical,' wrote Mr. Morrough O'Brien to Stead, '*Salus populi suprema lex* is ample and sufficient justification.'

CHAPTER 12

THE LATER PHASE OF 'THE NEW JOURNALISM': I. THE YEAR 1887

I

MATTHEW ARNOLD, RUSKIN, AND BERNARD SHAW ON THE AIMS AND METHODS OF THE *P.M.G.*

THE escapades – as Stead called them – which marked the earlier period of 'The New Journalism' were mainly, as we have seen, in the field of politics and of social reform. Those embarked upon by the *Pall Mall* during the years 1887–89 present a greater variety. They range from such exploits as the righting of Mrs. Langworthy and of Miss Cass, and bold defiances of the Government on behalf of Labour and of Ireland, to a memorable interview with the Tsar, a series of long talks with Tolstoi, and an inquiry, upon the spot, into the actual condition and the future prospects of Rome and the Vatican.

It was not until 1887 that Matthew Arnold was moved to coin the famous phrase. In the May issue of the *Nineteenth Century* we find him thus characterizing the methods which had won so much celebrity for Stead's journal:

> 'It is full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, generous instincts; its one fault is that it is feather-brained. It throws out assertions at a venture because it wishes them true; does not correct either them or itself, if they are false; and to get at the state of things as they really are it seems to feel no concern whatever.'

Every one read Matthew Arnold, his words were quoted everywhere, and the virtues and vices of the 'New Journalism' were, for many weeks to follow, the topic of the town. The *Pall Mall Gazette* was discussed from every point of view – at dinner parties and at the clubs, by leader-writers and by 'London Correspondents.' It was belauded and laughed at and abused whole-heartedly. 'This "New Journalism" is very English,' wrote one of its admirers,[1] 'and the fact explains its popularity. The proudest boast of the Englishman is that he says what he means and is prepared to accept the consequences of his saying.' De Quincey had talked about the victories of

[1] The London Correspondent of the National Press Agency.

the Press being gained with the noiselessness of the growth of corn, but that held good no longer. 'In these days the journalist who is determined to be heard must champion his cause on the house-tops of Askalon and in the streets of Gath. What is miscalled the "New Journalism" is merely journalism goaded into passionate enthusiasm by the vast amount of unredressed grievances which a great people, patiently, but needlessly and uselessly, endure in silence.'

The *Pall Mall* found another supporter, equally ardent, in Canon Wilberforce. 'It appears to have been left to a London evening newspaper,' he said later in the year, 'to monopolize public patriotism by its continued and prevailing protest against moral and social iniquities. By the determination of its editor to disregard the threatenings of those in authority and to treat popularity with contempt, it has brought about the protection of children from outrage . . . it has stirred the House of Commons into a public censure of the Home Secretary, because he would not bestir himself in the protection of an ill-treated and slandered girl, it has stimulated the Lord Chancellor into reproving a magistrate who was abusing his authority, it has chivalrously supported and caused justice to be done to a woman cruelly deceived. . . . This is patriotism after the pattern of the Patriot of Nazareth, inasmuch as it reforms abuses while it disregards consequences.'

But the most noteworthy utterance in the debate was from the pen of Ruskin, an old man now, and often ill, but at moments as vehement as ever. It appeared in the *Pall Mall* on June 8, under the heading:

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE *P.M.G.*
BY MR. JOHN RUSKIN

prefaced by some explanatory lines written by Stead. I give both the preface and the letter in full:

'The other day a valued contributor, signing himself "A Liberal," reviewed – possibly more as a theologian than as a critic – the Rev. Prebendary Row's work on *Future Retribution*. This appears to have prompted Mr. Ruskin to send us the following observations as to the true functions of the *Pall Mall Gazette* – observations, written in "anxious courtesy," which we accept with grateful thanks, although we may humbly claim, in one or two particulars, the privilege of dissent. It is a suggestive contribution from one of the master-thinkers of our time to the definition of the limitations and duties of journalism. There is a sad note of weariness in the postscript. If Mr. Ruskin were not somewhat worn with age, he would laugh at "the cruel and wicked form of libel," which is only the invariable formula by which commonplace people have accounted for all human phenomena, from St. Paul to General Gordon, the secret springs of whose actions are not to be found in the swine-trough of vulgar comfort or the most sweet voices of the applauding mob.

' "To the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

' "Sir,

' "Permit me in anxious courtesy to advise you that the function of the *Pall Mall Gazette* is neither to teach theology nor to criticize art.[1] You have taken an honest and powerful position in modern politics and ethics, and you have nothing whatever to do with traditions of eternal punishment, but only to bring, so far as you may, immediate malefactors to immediate punishment.

' "It is quite immaterial to the great interests of the British nation whether a popular music-master be knighted – or be left in his simple dignity of troubadour – but it is of infinite importance that the already belted knights of England should speak truth and do justice, and that the ancient Lords of England should hold their power in England, and of Ireland in Ireland, and of Scotland in Scotland – and not gamble and race their estates away – nor live in London Club-houses at the cost of their poor tenants.

' "These things you have to teach, sir, and to plead for; and permit me further to tell you, as your constant and often grieved reader, that as you make these columns in part useless with irrelevant religious debates and art gossip, so you make them too often horrible with records of crime which should be given only in the Police news.

' "Use your now splendidly organized body of correspondents to find out what is well done by good and wise men, under the advancing conditions of our civilization – expose, once for all, the fallacies of the dishonest or ignorant politicians, and name them no more – (how much type have you spent, do you suppose, in printing the names of the members of the present scratch Parliament, who know no more of policy than their parish beadle?).

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[1] In a subsequent letter Ruskin explained that he did not want the *Pall Mall* to print the mere 'echo of public conversation,' which was the stock-in-trade of the 'so-called art critics.' 'Art criticism,' he said, 'was not its business, but that of the *Spectator*, the *Athenæum*, and *The Times*, and "myriads of minor gazettes which have criticism for a speciality." '

' "Press home, whatever wise and gentle and practical truth you find spoken, whether in Parliament or out of it, by men who are seeking for truth and for peace.

' "And believe me always your faithful and grateful servant,

JOHN RUSKIN.

BRENTWOOD,
June 6.

' "I have not written this letter with my usual care, for I am at present tired and sad; but you will enough gather my meaning in it, and may I pray of your kindness, in any notice you may grant of the continuation of 'Præterita,' to contradict the partly idle, partly malicious, rumours which I find have got into other journals, respecting my state of health this spring. Whenever I write a word that my friends don't like, they say I am crazy; and never consider what a cruel and wicked form of libel they thus provoke against the work of an old age in all its convictions antagonistic to the changes of the times and in all its comfort oppressed by them." '

This communication drew forth another, even more remarkable, from a writer at this time almost unknown, now as famous as Ruskin himself – Mr. Bernard Shaw; I have shown Mr. Shaw's MS., which Stead (rather surprisingly) left unused, to two very distinguished journalists, both of them in the Liberal camp. The more progressive of the two read it seriously and remarked: 'It seems to me a very good letter'[1]; the more conservative laughed. 'Yes,' he said, when he reached the end of it, 'Yes, old Stead knew well when to suppress! Flim-flam it seems to me!'[2]

Whatever may have been Stead's reason for suppressing it then, there can be none for omitting it now. To me it seems not only an admirable composition in itself but a document of great interest biographically, as showing us what was thought of Stead and his crusading efforts by one of the founders of the Fabian Society, a body whose members were the *Pall Mall's* chief competitors in the field of social and political reform. H. M. Hyndman, and one or two other Social Democrats of the type we should now call 'High Brow,' had been treating Stead with contumely in their organ, *Justice*. Here is the letter:

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[1] The late Mr. William Archer.

[2] Mr. Bernard Shaw, in giving me permission to print the letter here, explains that it was not really intended for publication, and that Stead understood this. But Stead must, of course, have considered the question of publishing it, and his first impulse may well have been to do so.

'THE FUNCTION OF THE *PALL MALL GAZETTE*

'*To the Editor*

'SIR,

'The question raised in "anxious courtesy" by Mr. Ruskin is one that younger men are discussing with less patience, and perhaps with more hope. Your paper now enjoys a peculiar opportunity; it is the only existing one that has a chance of gaining the great place now going a-begging – that of leader of the Press in the march to meet the coming twentieth century. Your rivals are too blind, too deaf, too dumb, and too full of notions of literary propriety which may concern a guild of reviewers, but which, in the councils of newspaper editors as well as of statesmen, are misplaced frivolities. The future leadership is either for you, or for some one bold enough to mount on your shoulders.

'Foremost among your present disadvantages is the fact that you are bound by your position to support some party in Parliament, whereas there is no party at all representative of your views. For a year or so past you have been desperately trying to smuggle your opinions into the head of some public man, in the hope that, finding them there, he may mistake them for his own. You have treated your readers to sudden articles on Lord This, the Marquis of That, and Mr. the Other. After all, you say on these occasions, Lord This is a statesman. He is accustomed to weigh his words; he has a deep sense of public duty; and he is at this moment the arbiter of the fate of the Empire. What he will now undoubtedly do is – etc., etc., etc. (here you present him with an elaborate policy). Your readers, perfectly aware that Lord This, far from being what you are trying to make him act like, is simply a bewildered blockhead, chuckle over your ruse, and are not surprised to find his lordship either too dull to understand your programme or too obstinate to be beholden to you for it. Baffled, but not discouraged, you try again with the Marquis of That, ingeniously contriving to take him seriously by contrasting him with some specially flippant member of his own party. But the Marquis of That, being patently to all the world an artistocratic cynic run to seed, without conviction enough to run a coffee-tavern, much less an empire, has no relish for your enthusiastic urgency, and would deride it if the responsibilities of office were not making him too uncomfortable even for sneering. And when you fall back on Mr. the Other, either he is vindictive and will not forgive you for having been less complimentary on former occasions, or he is conceited and will not be dictated to by an evening paper, or else he is not the man you take him for. Whereupon, disgusted with yourself for having wasted a hope on any of them, you drub them impartially all round and plunge into Home Rule, a proximate and simple issue, practically difficult, but not obscure in principle.

'The peculiar reputation of the *Pall Mall*, however, was not gained by its coolness of judgment in political matters of the Home Rule type. It is something to have brought the Jingoes to their senses about Russia, and Mr. Gladstone to his senses about the exclusion of the Irish representatives from Westminster. But the word put in for Russia, and so brilliantly seconded by Madame Novikoff, compelled an assent that was at its best a sullen one, for were the Tsar personally another Angel Gabriel, we should none the less be mad to build upon the stability or good faith of a despotic bureaucracy. And Home Rule is not yet achieved. To neither of these questions, then, does the *Pall Mall* owe its unique position. That is wholly due to its memorable resolution to attack social abuses with the terrible weapon of truth-telling. If you sheathe that weapon, what will maintain the paper in its present place when the Afghan frontier and Home Rule are forgotten?

'I venture to predict that the future is to the journal which, having gained a wide hearing, will dare to tell polite society that it lives by the robbery and murder of the poor, and to ask pardon of the poor for its tacit approval of such robbery and murder in the past. The denial of this is the great lie that is rotting our national life. Every recommendation to the poor to be more industrious, more thrifty, and more temperate implies the falsehood that the poor are poor because they are idle, improvident, and drunken, and the rich rich because they are the reverse. Every homily to the workers on the importance of our industrial capital is intended to convey the falsehood that that capital was created by the present holders of it. The air is thick with lying on this vital question. It is useless to challenge discussion, to point to the children of the poor dying in heaps before our eyes because the fruit of their parents' excessive toil is being consumed by useless idlers, or to prove to the hilt from the most eminent "orthodox" statisticians and economists that their science neither explains it away, excuses it, nor proves it to be inevitable. Society will not listen; it does not mean to be ill-natured; but, like Colonel O'Callaghan, it must have its unearned income; and if the people will not pay, the police and the military must make them: and that is all. And, so far, the *Pall Mall Gazette* does not seem to object. True, you send your spirited Commissioner to Bodyke, and his "blood is up" there; but you sit here in London in the midst of worse things, and your blood seems to remain down. Now the working men who are beginning to read your paper know that your Commissioner may get his blood to boiling point any week at evictions in Bethnal Green and Bermondsey without the expense of a trip to Bodyke; and they are asking whether there is any chance of your denouncing my Lord Decimus and Mr. Casby as you have denounced Colonel O'Callaghan and Mr. Hosford.[1]

'If I could palm a programme upon you as you have vainly tried to palm one on Lord This and the rest of them, I should beg you to dish the Socialists by helping to get back the land and the misappropriated capital for the people by such measures as the municipalization of town rents, the nationalization of railways, the sweeping away of our inexpressibly wicked workhouse prisons in favour of State-owned farms and factories to which the wretches who now drudge in our sweaters' workshops should come for employment and due reward, and the utter repudiation of the claim of the sweater (as the incarnation of private enterprise) to be protected from the competition of the whole people organized to secure their own welfare. The truths in this matter are even harder to tell than were those of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. In branding an elderly voluptuary as a detestable satyr you have public opinion on your side; but the public opinion that is to brand, as in effect selfish thieves, many thoroughly amiable and well-intentioned men of culture, with their gentle and refined wives and accomplished daughters, all living gracefully and generously together on rent and dividends, is a public opinion that has yet to be created. That it must be created and acted upon if we are to avert the social decay which the increase of our population alone is surely bringing upon us is as certain as any deduction from economic science can possibly be. That the newspaper which does most to create that opinion is destined to be the best abused and most popular one in England is not equally certain. But that the chances are worth weighing by the *Pall Mall Gazette* above all other papers, is the opinion of many, believe me, besides

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[1] Mr. Bernard Shaw, in a note on the margin of my typescript, says: 'See *Little Dorrit*. The Duke of Bedford and his agent Mr. Bourne may have been in my mind.'

Your obedient servant,
(*Signed*) G. Bernard Shaw.

29 Fitzroy Square, W.
June 8, 1887.'

II

THE FAMOUS CASE OF MRS. LANGWORTHY

Canon Wilberforce's phrase, cited above, about the *Pall Mall Gazette's* having won justice 'for a woman cruelly deceived' refers, of course, to the very famous case of Mrs. Langworthy, while the 'ill-treated and slandered girl' was Miss Cass.[1]

Conspicuous among the letters and documents which Stead preserved touching upon these two affairs is a telegram received by him at Cambridge House, Wimbledon, on the evening of August 9, 1887, containing these words, recorded at the West Strand Telegraph Office at 7.5 p.m.:

'Verdict twenty thousand pounds, fifteen hundred costs, child secured, Langworthy.'

That was one of the moments when Stead must have felt – even more keenly than was his wont – that life was worth living!

On May 25 he had published, as *Pall Mall Gazette Extra No.* 35, his famous pamphlet, *The Langworthy Marriage: or, a Millionaire's Shame*, in which – very melodramatically, but with real feeling and immense vigour – he retold, in an amplified form, the story of Mrs. Langworthy's experiences as already set forth day by day in the paper. That story may be condensed into a few lines: Mr. Edward Martin Langworthy, a very wealthy Englishman of about five and thirty, a widower, had trapped a well-born and well-educated young girl of twenty-three, Miss Mildred Long, daughter of an Irish land-agent, into a pseudo-religious marriage which was no marriage, and had afterwards deserted her and treated her with gross cruelty, leaving her and a baby daughter, Gladys, to destitution. For year after year Mrs. Langworthy tried in vain, advised by experienced solicitors, to obtain legal redress. 'But a little longer,' wrote Stead in the Prologue to his pamphlet, 'and he (Langworthy) will force her to despair, perhaps to death. To avert that lamentable ending to a heroic struggle of four years, to thwart the conspiracy of wealth and power, this strange and over-true story of to-day is published to-day. For such offences, where the law is powerless, and the High Court of Justice is contemned, publicity is our last and only resource.'

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[1] Miss Cass had been wrongfully accused of 'molestation' on police evidence only. Stead's intervention resulted in her acquittal.

And he plunges at once into his narrative, the substance of which, as he says, although it might seem incredible to the ordinary reader, was 'already familiar to half a dozen English Judges!'

It was a thrilling narrative for people with warm hearts, and the moment Stead announced in the *Pall Mall* that he was taking up the matter, and wanted a 'Fighting Fund,' money poured in from every direction – postal-orders from Camden Town, substantial cheques from Palace Gardens, remittances of one kind or another from all parts of the Empire and from the Continent. I see a reference to five dollars from Montreal, and to twelve francs from an American painter in Paris. The first of a series of letters to Stead from Mrs. Langworthy is in grateful acknowledgment of the *Pall Mall's* generous gift of £105, received by her on May 12, 1887. Although the case did not finish until August 9 of that year, the battle had been as good as won three weeks earlier. There is a letter dated July 16 in which Mrs. Langworthy's mother tells Stead that it is to him alone the victory is due. 'Little Gladys,' she declares, 'will be taught to love and pray for Mr. Stead as her mother's best earthly friend. As to myself, it is vain to try and express my gratitude.'

It was a great triumph and all generous souls rejoiced over it. It was fine to see such a wrong redressed, the powers of wealth defied, and the impotence and lethargy of the lawyers shamed by the skill and energy and devotion of this fearless knight-errant.

Many years afterwards there was to be a tragic sequel. One day Mrs. Langworthy received a letter from the man who had so grievously wronged her, in which he said he was ill in Paris and asked her to come to him. She did so, and on the evening of her arrival the two dined together. That very night Mrs. Langworthy mysteriously died, and her body was buried or cremated without any *post-mortem* examination. On the following day Langworthy committed suicide.[1]

III

THE INTERLUDE OF MRS. GORDON-BAILLIE

Perhaps the most picturesque among all the strange specimens of humanity who found their way into Stead's editorial den in 1887 was the beautiful and fascinating Mrs. Gordon-Baillie, who turned out to be an adventuress and the self-taught child of a poor Aberdeen washer-woman. She is described by a resident in Birmingham, who knew her well at one stage of her extraordinary existence, as a woman of most distinguished appearance, 'with a massive face and head, fit to grace the shoulders of a Lord Chief Justice'; endowed 'with many and varied abilities,' and 'speaking with fluency at least three European languages.' Among several eminent victims to her charms was that delightfully expansive and very brilliant old gentleman, Professor J. S. Blackie. After a visit which she paid him and his wife at their home in Douglas Crescent, Edinburgh, he wrote her one of his characteristically exuberant letters, sending her his 'most recent volume,' and begging her in return to let him have her photograph – the one which she had given to Mrs. Blackie seemed to him quite unsatisfactory: 'I want,' he said, 'a true reflection of the rare mixture of Doric strength and Ionic grace which is your dower.' A less susceptible observer, to whom she was merely 'an uneducated woman of considerable natural ability and great energy,' was 'at a loss to understand how she succeeded in obtaining the confidence of men like Professor Blackie and Bishop Sandford of Tasmania' – where her good looks and attractive manners had also made conquests. 'I can, however, imagine,' he added, 'that she found no difficulty in winning the hearts of lodging-house keepers, job-masters, and people of that class.'

The *St. James's Gazette* was one of the first of the London newspapers to take her seriously – seriously enough, that is, to print such a paragraph as the following:

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[1] The facts are thus recorded in a letter from Stead to a friend, dated December 2, 1910.

'A NEW HOME FOR HIGHLAND CROFTERS

'A correspondent writes: Mrs. Gordon-Baillie, who came forward so prominently in aiding the Skye crofters in 1883, has just passed through London on her way to the Highlands, on her return from an eighteen months' tour through Australia and New Zealand. Her mission for establishing Scotch village fishing settlements has been successful, large grants of seaboard land having been secured in Tasmania and Australia. She expects great assistance from the Government in transferring the crofters now in distress to their new homes.'

Then came Stead's turn, and we can imagine how responsive he must have been to the fair seductress! His heart went out to any woman who came to him for help or encouragement, whether she was old or young, plain or handsome, dull or clever, good or bad. Had it been safe for Mrs. Gordon-Baillie to remain on indefinitely in London and make the Editor of the *P.M.G.* her mainstay, the consequences to Stead's private purse might have been serious indeed; he was always an easy prey even to less accomplished swindlers. Fortunately things became too hot for her very soon, and she vanished – presently to be arrested, tried, and imprisoned for a period of some years. Among Stead's papers I have found a comical illustration of the kind of thing in store for him had Mrs. Gordon-Baillie's London career been prolonged. This consists of a bill made out to her by a fashionable tailor, dated December 28, 1887, for

	£	*s.*	*d.*
A Green Refine Suit, black collar and cuffs (for footman Gigner)	5	0	0
Striped Valencia Vest	0	15	0
	£5	15	0

and enclosed to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* with the following note dated March 21, 1888:

'SIR,

'I have been informed that all persons who have any claims against Mrs. Gordon-Baillie have been requested to forward the same to you. I therefore venture to hand you the enclosed and trust that you may be in a position to forward a cheque for the amount.

Your obedient Servant'

IV

'BLOODY SUNDAY'; STEAD AND MRS. BESANT AND 'THE LINK'

The Year of Jubilee, 1887, was also a year of much trouble in Ireland and acute Labour unrest in England. It was the year of 'Parnellism and Crime,' of Mr. Balfour's Coercion Bill, and of Mr. William O'Brien's imprisonment. Sympathizers with Labour were for the most part sympathizers with Ireland also, and it was Mr. Balfour's way of dealing with Mr. O'Brien that brought the year's violence to a climax with 'Bloody Sunday,' November 13. On that afternoon a demonstration of protest against the Government was to be held in Trafalgar Square. In order to prevent it, Sir Charles Warren, Chief Commissioner of Police, issued on the evening before a peremptory order forbidding processions within a certain area. The organizers, a combination of Socialists and advanced Radicals, decided to hold the meeting nevertheless, the various processions of demonstrators to break up 'under protest' if interfered with, and their members making their way, as best they could, to the Square. A tragic conflict with the police was the result.

Stead used often to say during the last twenty years of his life that he had a clear presentiment as to how he was to meet his end – he would be kicked to death by an angry mob. And he was wont to laugh cheerfully as he made this announcement. He exulted in the idea of taking his share in a real fight – the more violent the better – on the side of the ill-used and down-trodden. It seems a pity that he was not in the thick of that 'Bloody Sunday' *melée*, shoulder to shoulder with his friends, Mr. John Burns and Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham. It was at four o'clock in the afternoon that Burns, 'the well-known Socialist leader,' as he used then to be styled, and the elegant, distinguished-looking Member of Parliament, made their attempt to penetrate into the Square through the files of policemen who barred the way at the Strand corner of it. The police used their batons and Cunninghame Graham received a blow on the forehead, inflicting a wound which bled freely.

If Stead missed a chance in not being present on this occasion, at least he was swift to be the warmest and most venturesome champion of the fighters. Not content with spreading broadcast in his pamphlet, *Remember Trafalgar Square*, an unsparing attack on the Government whose alternating moods of despotism and irresolution throughout the year had led up to this scene of brutality, he at once set about the establishment of a Law and Liberty League, to defend all persons accused of offences committed in vindication of the right of public meeting; to prosecute in all cases where the police had been guilty of outrages on individual liberty or public right; and in every other practicable way to defend the public liberties threatened by police proclamations.

In this movement he had for closest ally Mrs. Annie Besant, now famous throughout the world as President of the Theosophical Society,[1] well known at that time as a Socialist leader, and ardent worker in the fields of education and municipal reform. In her Autobiography Mrs. Besant describes most movingly what she herself witnessed on 'Bloody Sunday,' and gives the following account of an incident which helped to bring her and Stead together – they had known each other already for some years.

'One man, Linnell, died almost immediately: others from the effect of their injuries. The next day there was a regular court-martial in Bow Street Police Court – witnesses kept out by the police, men dazed with their wounds, decent workmen of unblemished character who had never been charged in a police-court before, sentenced to imprisonment without chance of defence. But a gallant band rallied to their rescue. William T. Stead, most chivalrous of journalists, opened a Defence Fund, and money rained in; my pledged bail came up by the dozen, and we got the men out on appeal. By sheer audacity I got into the police-court, addressed the magistrate, too astounded by my profound courtesy and calm assurance to remember that I had no right there, and then produced bail after bail of the most undeniable character and respectability, which no magistrate could refuse. Breathing-time gained, a barrister, Mr. W. M. Thompson, worked day after day with hearty devotion, and took up the legal defence. Fines were paid, and here Mrs. Marx Aveling did eager service. A pretty regiment I led out of Millbank prison, after paying their fines ; bruised, clothes torn, hatless, we must have looked

[1] It was Stead who introduced Mrs. Besant to Theosophy. 'Can you review these?' he asked her in the early spring of 1889, handing her the two volumes of Mme. Blavatsky's work, *The Secret Doctrine* – they had been sent to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. 'My young men all fight shy of them, but you are quite mad enough on these subjects to make something of them.'

a disreputable lot. We stopped and bought hats, to throw an air of respectability over our *cortège*, and we kept together until I saw the men into train and omnibus, lest, with the bitter feelings now roused, conflict should again arise. We formed the Law and Liberty League to defend all unjustly assailed by the police, and thus rescued many a man from prison; and we gave poor Linnell, killed in Trafalgar Square, a public funeral. Sir Charles Warren forbade the passing of the hearse through any of the main thoroughfares west of Waterloo Bridge, so the processions waited there for it. W. T. Stead, R. Cunninghame Graham, Herbert Burrows, and myself walked on one side the coffin, William Morris, F. Smith, R. Dowling, and J. Seddon on the other ; the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, the officiating clergyman, walked in front; fifty stewards carrying long wands guarded the coffin. From Wellington Street to Bow Cemetery the road was one mass of human beings, who uncovered reverently as the slain man went by; at Aldgate the procession took three-quarters of an hour to pass one spot, and thus we bore Linnell to his grave, symbol of a cruel wrong, the vast orderly, silent crowd, bareheaded, making mute protest against the outrage wrought.'

In the succeeding chapters of her book Mrs. Besant records how after these exciting events, Stead and she became close friends, 'he Christian, I Atheist, burning with one common love for man, one common hatred against oppression,' and how she discovered that while she had been brooding over the conception of a 'new Church which should include all who had the common ground of faith in, and love for, man,' Stead had been wondering whether 'men might not be persuaded to be as earnest about making this world happy as they are over saving their souls.' And she reprints the following sentences from an article which she published in February 1888, in her little sixpenny magazine, *Our Corner*:

'The teaching of social duty, the upholding of social righteousness, the building up of a true commonwealth – such would be among the aims of the Church of the future. Is the hope too fair for realization? Is the winning of such beatific vision yet once more the dream of the enthusiast? But surely the one fact that persons so deeply differing in theological creeds as those who have been toiling for the last three months to aid and relieve the oppressed can work in absolute harmony side by side for the one end – surely this proves that there is a bond which is stronger than our antagonisms, a unity which is deeper than the speculative theories which divide.'

The direct outcome of these aspirations was the founding of a halfpenny weekly journal entitled *The Link*, the spirit of which was described in its motto taken from Victor Hugo:

'The people are silence. I will be the advocate of this silence. I will speak for the dumb. I will speak of the small to the great and of the feeble to the strong. . . . I will speak for all the despairing silent ones. I will interpret this stammering; I will interpret the grumblings, the murmurs, the tumults of crowds, the complaints ill-pronounced, and all these cries of beasts that, through ignorance and through suffering, man is forced to utter. . . . I will be the Word of the People. I will be the bleeding mouth whence the gag is snatched out. I will say everything.'

Among the most interesting and charming letters which Stead ever received must have been those which now began to reach him day after day from his Co-Editor of *The Link* – some of them from the office in Bouverie Street, some from her lodgings at 19 Avenue Road, St. John's Wood. They make a delightful impression, with their blend of warm humanity, intimate friendship and affectionate fun; if Mrs. Besant permitted me to do so, I should be disposed to cite some long passages from them – passages wherein she opens her mind freely to her understanding fellow-worker; but they are all so confidential, it is so obvious that they were meant for Stead's eye alone, that clearly I must refrain. I have asked her sanction only for the brief extracts which follow.

The letters all begin playfully or informally – 'My dear Head Centre,' or 'My dear Sir Galahad,' or 'My dear friend'; and they end usually – '*Addio*, A. B.'; sometimes, 'yours always, dear friend, St. George.' Most of them are on little square sheets of note-paper, with a big, gold-lettered 'Annie' in the left-hand top corner, which gives them a jolly school-girlish look, quaintly incongruous with the desperate earnestness of *The Link*. The first is dated January 3, the last, April 24. Stead preserved many other communications from Mrs. Besant, but it is only with this little batch of the early *Link* letters that I am dealing.

The second letter, dated January 4, contains her comments on the editorial which Stead wrote for Number I of the new journal. 'I like your article much,' she says, 'and only venture to make the following criticisms on one or two points that might affect Atheists. "Believe in the citizen Christ" – we should say he was not an ideal citizen, the "resist not evil" being the very antithesis of the citizenship we teach.' Other points of the same kind follow, all made quietly and reasonably, but they are indicative of the difficulties in Stead's path. 'I know all this sounds very ungracious,' Mrs. Besant continues, 'but you may easily make it impossible for Atheists to join our church. The paper is admirable; just what needs to be said.'

Another note written the same evening, ends thus: 'Goodnight and *Addio*! Is it not queer that your "God bless you" to me somehow has a sort of comforting sound in it? Yet on the whole, dear friend, my creed has on one point a loftier touch than yours, for it makes the performance of duty so wholly its own reward. We have no crowns on the other side.'

'Never hesitate, *please*,' she writes on another occasion, 'to say quite naturally your own feeling about God. I never am conscious of any protest, and your God is always the Friend of Man. You even, now and then, make me wish I could believe as you do, and certainly you never jar on me.'

On January 7 the funeral of a workman was to take place. On the 6th, Mrs. Besant writes: 'I think you ought to go to-morrow. I am very sorry for your children's sake, for I would rather disappoint grown-ups than young things. But the case is a very sad one, and we *must* show honour to any who die or go to gaol, or our people will lose heart. . . . Twelve of the choir will sing Morris's death-song; you will have to speak.'

A fortnight later she tells of a visit to Mrs. Cunninghame Graham, whose husband is in prison. 'I found her ill,' she writes, 'but left her much cheerier, having soothed her mind as to her Robert's condition. . . . She was so glad to see me, poor little thing.'

Two days later there is a reference to Mrs. John Burns, whom she has brought home to dinner after a lecture at South Place Chapel. Mrs. Burns, she reports, is delighted with the first issue of *The Link* (with an article in it by Stead on her husband), and is going to do her best to sell twenty quires of it – 540 copies. She is 'eager to do something to help.'

Towards the end of April these matters have receded into the background a little, and Stead is off to Russia to interview the Tsar. In Mrs. Besant's life, active as it is, and crowded with good and useful work, the going of her friend, with all his sympathy and stimulating high spirits, threatens to leave a blank; and she writes to him somewhat ruefully and at greater length than of wont. Incidentally she speaks of that 'curious power' of his 'of making one feel content although there is nothing to be contented about.' 'I suppose,' she continues, 'it is because you are so good that your very presence is like the "Peace, be still" of the Christ, and there is "a great calm." '

The friendship thus begun endured to the last. With what pride and happiness Mrs. Besant still cherishes the thought of it these lines will tell:

'A MEMORY

'The privilege has been offered to me of saying a few words on one whom all his friends loved, that many-sided personality known as William T. Stead. If I wanted one word to characterize him, I should call him the ideal Friend. His heart was as big as his brain was alert, and it never seemed to be crowded, for there was always room for another. As you entered his room, he sprang to his feet, face beaming, hands outstretched: "Oh, my dear, how glad I am to see you!" The welcome never failed, fair weather or foul, and there was always time. The motto we gave to *The Link*, "The union of those who love in the service of all who suffer," expressed his life; he always loved, and he always served. His sympathy was quick, ever upspringing, but never blind nor foolish. A veritable knight-errant was he, riding forth against tyranny, against injustice, against falsehood, against any enthroned wrong. And how dauntless was his courage, how quick to see the way to save! Who but W. T. Stead would have "procured" a young girl, to prove beyond doubt how helpless piteous children were sold and bought, and then have turned the dock into a pulpit, and the gaol into a recruiting ground for crusaders against vice and the degradation of womanhood? How joyously he paid the penalty which was to be the price of the safety of the girl-child! How red-hot was his fury against the dissolute triflers whose trail was marked by broken hearts and outraged lives!

'And it was done in the day's work, as what had to be done, and no fuss needed in the doing. With the highest as with the lowest he was himself, always at his ease. He told me how he met the Tsar: "I went in, and he came a step forward and held out his hand. I shook it. He seemed rather surprised." "Well," I said, "Tsars are not accustomed to have their hands shaken." "Oh!" murmured Stead, quaintly.

'Of England he had the highest ideal – "God's Englishman" was a favourite phrase. "God's Englishman" was to be the righter of all earth's wrongs, the champion of the weak, the liberator of the oppressed. When this ideal was tarnished, his wrath knew no bounds. He, like Cromwell, felt himself to be God's weapon, sure that he was right and doing "God's work." His God was no idler in a far-off heaven, but a mighty living spirit, working through men and women for the improvement of His world.

'Stead cared nothing whether a cause was popular or unpopular. If Modern Babylon cut down the advertisement income of his paper, what did it matter? If championship of the unemployed alienated the clubmen of Pall Mall, the more reason why he and I should trudge on foot, from Soho to Mile End, beside the body of the workless man struck down in Trafalgar Square. Did the underpaid match-girls of Bryant and May come raging up Fleet Street to my office, with demand for help, who so ready as Stead to take up their cause? No wonder that timid proprietors of high-class journals cold-shouldered the ablest journalist that England had produced, the man with that strange *flair* for to-morrow's events and opinions which is the essence of journalistic genius. He was a man of fire, but cool and self-possessed in action; of faultless courage, but not reckless; optimistic, because he believed in the triumph of the Right; with unshakable faith in God, but working as though the issue depended on himself alone.

'His cast-off body sank in the icy Atlantic, and left a gap which has not yet been filled. His freed spirit sprang aloft rejoicing, dauntless in death as in life. For him death had no terrors, for he knew so many of the "living dead." He knew that Death had no power over man, since "God created him in the image of His own Eternity." In that faith he lived and worked; in that faith he passed on into other fields of service; in that faith he shall come again, to use his ripened powers in the service of the world, which needs such as he was, and is, and shall be.

ANNIE BESANT, D.L.'

CHAPTER 13

THE LATER PHASE OF 'THE NEW JOURNALISM': II. THE YEARS 1888–89

I

STEAD IN PARIS: AN UNFLATTERING IMPRESSION

It was during 1888 and 1889 that Stead wrote two of his best books, *Truth about Russia*, and *The Pope and the New Era*.[1] Nearly all his other very numerous volumes, whether short or long, are in the nature of pamphlets; already most of them have vanished from sight. These two, however, are still to be met with in many households and public libraries, and their freshness even now, after the lapse of more than thirty years, is quite remarkable. Stead infused into them much of his own vitality.

The Russian book grew out of letters contributed to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in May and June 1888. The story of how Stead came to make that continental tour, and of all that it entailed, is full of interest.

A representative of the *Star* – the evening paper which a few months previously had been founded by Mr. T. P. O'Connor – discovered Stead at the *Pall Mall Gazette* office on the evening of April 27, 1888, giving his final instructions to E. T. Cook, and 'hurling divers goods and chattels' – including a suit of dress clothes – into his patient portmanteau. A round fur-cap, which Madame Novikoff had given him, and which the *Star* reporter assumed would be worn for the purpose occasionally of 'disguise as a Moujik,' was one item included in the packing. The dialogue of the five minutes' 'interview' need not detain us. Stead was off on a journalistic mission which might last two weeks, but which might take two months. The state of Europe was extremely critical. The Boulanger business and the impending death of the Emperor Frederick had utterly deranged the balance of European power, which had now shifted completely to St. Petersburg. Stead was off to St. Petersburg to study matters and to talk with the Tsar. So much the *Star* was able to record in its special edition.

Stead's first stopping-place was Paris. A reminiscence of his visit written long afterwards by Mrs. Emily Crawford, and printed in

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[1] This was published first in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and a number of provincial papers under the title 'Letters from the Vatican.'

Truth, gives so vivid a picture of him that no honest or intelligent biographer could pass it by.[1] It is an unpleasing picture, and it may well strike Stead's friends as a malicious one, but I do not believe there is any real malice in it. We know our Stead by this time far more intimately than Mrs. Crawford ever knew him, and we have no need to remind ourselves of his splendid and noble qualities. He was a Greatheart and a man in a million; but, like everybody else, he had his faults, and they were more than usually conspicuous, evidently, on this occasion. Mrs. Crawford's narrative may exaggerate, but the harshest epithet that can be fairly applied to it, I think, is 'unsympathetic.' She had for Stead very much the same kind of censorious distaste which Mr. Wilfrid Blunt expresses in his published Diary;[2] and they both put their sentiments into writing within a week of the sinking of the *Titanic*. But this does certainly not detract from the sincerity of Mr. Blunt's criticisms or of Mrs. Crawford's portraiture.

The famous Paris correspondent had written articles for the *Pall Mall*, and had found Stead 'a very satisfactory Editor,' she confesses, until he began – while eulogizing herself – to attack violently the morning newspaper to which she was regularly accredited, the *Daily News*. This habit of his, she says, had caused her 'much inward annoyance.' But, quite apart from that, she accused him in her mind of 'intense egoism' and 'incurable indiscretion.' She could not deny that in some respects he was 'a diamond,' but she thought of him as the roughest diamond imaginable.

Such was her attitude towards him when at seven o'clock on that April morning her servant came into her room to wake her and to inform her that an Englishman – *un type assez original* – wanted to see her. The story proceeds:

'I told her to present him with a pencil and paper and bring me back the paper and anything he had written on it. This she did. The writing was: "W. T. Stead on urgent business, and wants to see you now." I rose, dressed, and went to see with what urgent matter he came charged. He had come over in a tourist's train, arrived in the night, walked about, and then come over to look me up and ask me to help him out of a "corner." His "boss," Mr. Yates Thompson, he said, wanted to "chuck" him, and he wanted to make an independent journalistic situation for himself. "You are well acquainted," he said, "with President Carnot, his Prime Minister Floquet, his Foreign Minister Goblet, and so on. The peace of Europe is now on an unstable basis, and very shaky. I want to interview these statesmen as a means to interviewing Bismarck, and then the Tsar, who, too, dominates the situation. Were I able to do this, I might hope to see Yates-Thompson at my feet." I threw cold water on the scheme. He appealed to me as a fellow-journalist and personal friend. I then said I would do my best on one condition – the cessation of his attacks on the daily paper already referred to, and of the praises he bestowed on my unworthy self. He promised, and kept thenceforth his word in this respect.

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[1] *Truth*, April 24, 1912. (By kind permission of the proprietors of the journal.)

[2] *My Diaries*, Part II, p. 386.

'I went in the early forenoon to see Mme. Carnot to ascertain whether, through her, the interview with the President could be obtained. She thought not, but offered to see whether the President had any objection, but reminded me of the reserve he imposed on himself as a constitutional head of the State. She, however, so far yielded as to offer to telegraph to the French Ambassador in London (Waddington) to know whether, in his opinion, the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Mr. Stead, was a desirable person to be acquainted with, for she had thought of asking him to lunch. The answer came without delay: " The person in question is dangerously indiscreet, and feared by his friends for his indiscretion."

'Stead waited for me on a bench in the Champs Elysées. I forbore to tell him the substance of the telegram, but conjectured that his well-known energy was more feared than admired in the official world. He seemed out of sorts at my failure, and asked if I could do nothing with the principal Ministers, spoke of the hostility of his "boss" and of his own bad outlook.'

Mrs. Crawford determined to try the Prime Minister, M. Floquet, and after some hesitation he consented, and named a time in the early afternoon.

'Thus authorized (Mrs. Crawford continues), I took Mr. Stead to the Ministry. I should say that he was generally courageous to foolhardiness. On this occasion the palatial splendour of the Prime Ministerial residence visibly cowed him. His heart, as did the Queen of Sheba's, sank. As he looked round, almost awestruck, an usher entered to say that the Minister desired to receive me. My companion offered to follow, but the servant told him in broken English not to. I found the Premier with the London telegram to the Elysée in his hand. He read it. "You see how it is," he said, and we had some more talk. He yielded reluctantly, and ordered that Monsieur Stead be introduced.

'It was my turn to feel heart-sick. The appearance of Mr. Stead appalled me. He forgot to take off a worn-out sealskin cap. His yellowish-brown tweed suit, ill-cut, ill-fitting and untidy, shocked in a room remarkable for its harmonious elegance and eighteenth-century tone and lightness of colour, with a revealing May-day light pouring in through three high windows. The cap gave the wearer the air of a dog-stealer. A propitiatory smile completely bared two rows of peculiarly set teeth. With this smile the eyes, so beautifully blue, of Mr. Stead when he was airing Borderland musings and looking so much the seer, entirely disappeared. He might have been a poacher, who saw an opportunity to snare a pheasant, for all that was craftily mischievous in his character came out in the countenance. But when he sat down and warmed up in conversation one saw a man of great and fine originality, not to say of genius. Noticing the effect of this change on M. Floquet, I asked him to open to us the door of M. Goblet's office by telephone – a then recently applied means of communication between Ministries. He did so, but as the telephoning went on for some time in the next room I fancied that they had had difficulties to overcome. When he stopped communication he told me that we might go direct to the Foreign Ministry. M. Goblet spoke English perfectly, but preferred to talk through me as an interpreter in French. This would give him more time, and if he made any slip of the tongue opportunity to correct it at once. But M. Floquet feared that he must not be interviewed for a newspaper merely to *éclairer la réligion de M. Stead.*

'We drove to the Foreign Ministry, and found the Minister in quite a good humour. But he refused to hold any conversation unless Mr. Stead distinctly pledged himself not to repeat anything he said in any journal. He also had just heard from London of the indiscretions of the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette.*

'The conversation and the interpretation seemed vastly to amuse M. Goblet, and it went on for some time. He repeated his interdiction on any interview or mention of his name or the mere fact of his having received Mr. Stead.

'We drove, after a turn in the Salon, in the course of which Stead unconsciously revealed himself in what was best, and anything but best, in his nature. After that he went home, and next day I saw him at the northern terminus *en route* for Cologne, Berlin, and St. Petersburg. Judge of my vexation on seeing the next morning, or the one after, a flaming article on the international situation of France, and really an interview with the Foreign Minister, but without giving his name. The flimsy veil hid nothing. Goblet never forgave me. Floquet did.'[1]

II

STEAD AND TSAR ALEXANDER III

Truth about Russia in its volume form is easily accessible, as I have said, for anyone who cares to read it, so I shall not enlarge on its contents or follow its author's course *via* Berlin to Russia, and home again.[2] Stead's chief triumph was in securing the desired interview with the Tsar, but it was a tantalizing triumph, inasmuch as he was debarred from turning it to full account. In fact, he was not to make any direct allusion to it, but merely to avail himself of the opportunity of finding out the Tsar's views and interpreting them in his own words to his readers. In later years Stead referred occasionally to the subject of this interview, citing some of the Tsar's remarks, but he never published the full record of it which he dictated at the time to some typist in St. Petersburg, perhaps at the British Embassy, where he was a frequent guest of Sir Robert Morier, the Ambassador. I shall give some extracts from this very noteworthy document, which is dated in Russian style, May 24/12. The interview took place at the Imperial Palace at Gatschina:

'When I entered he was alone. He came forward. I made a somewhat low bow. General Richter had not accompanied me, only the archer opened the door and motioned me to enter. I did so. He closed it behind me, and I saw the Emperor. He rose as I came in – came forward, and after I had bowed, said: "Mr. Stead, I am very glad to see you," and gave me his hand, which I shook, saying that I felt greatly honoured by being allowed to see him. He said: "You do not speak French? I am not used to speaking English." "No," said I, "I do not speak French, a little German I understand, but you understand English much better than I understand German." "It is difficult for me to make myself understood in English," he said, "but there is a chair if you care to sit down." He sat down in his chair, before a table at which he receives Ministers. I sat down on the other side. He began: "Have you seen many things since you came to Russia?" '

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[1] Mr. Bernard Shaw, after reading these pages in typescript, makes the comment: 'This was Stead all over. But one has very little patience with Goblet and Floquet and Mrs. Crawford for not seeing that there was no sense in giving Stead an interview at all, if not for publication. In fact, Stead was fully entitled to assume that the conditions imposed were mere formalities, meant to "save face" if necessary, and that the two statesmen would have been furious with him for wasting their time if he had not reported what they said. But I feel sure that Stead never thought twice about it.'

[2] One of the most interesting sections of the volume is that in which Stead describes a week's visit to Tolstoi at his country place.

Stead replied that he had come to see people rather than things, and mentioned those whom he had met. After some preliminary talk of no great interest, the dialogue continues thus:

I. 'But, your Majesty, I wish to say to you what I have long felt very deeply. I have said it before to many Russians, and now I hasten to say it to you who represent all Russians. I remember how England has injured Russia. I feel as if my proper place was not sitting on this chair talking to your Majesty, but kneeling humbly at your feet, begging your forgiveness for all the injuries we have inflicted on your country.'

His whole face lighted up with a pleasant, simple smile.

I went on: 'Yes, we have injured you. When I think of 1876, and how we tried to alter it all, and failed, I am full of remorse. We did our best, we who followed Mr. Gladstone, to reverse the old policy, and if we had succeeded you would have been spared all the sacrifices of that war. But we were not strong enough, and you had to go through it, and all for our fault. Oh! that terrible time when the war went on, and battles followed battles with their long roll of the dead, and Plevna with its thousands slain, all of whom would not have fallen but for us, I felt as if it was we, as if it was England that was doing it all, as if we were responsible for all these thousands of lives, and millions of treasure. Oh! it was criminal, and if you hated us bitterly – as we should hate any nation that had treated us in that way (my eyes flashed as I spoke) – no one can wonder. We could have saved you all that, and we did not; it was our doing, that slaughter and that sacrifice. And all for nothing?'

He. 'Yes, it was bad, for nothing. But the *Pall Mall Gazette* is the only paper in England that holds these views.'

I. 'In London I fear we are alone. The other papers are very bad, but in the provinces there are more rational papers which are not so hostile.'

He. 'So Lord Churchill told me,[1] but I do not see them.'

I. 'Naturally not. But I was not aware that you even saw the *Pall Mall*.'

He. 'Oh, yes, it is always taken here.'

I. 'I knew it once was, but I did not know it was so still.'

He. 'Still.'

I. 'I am very glad to hear that it is so. But there is a more reasonable feeling gaining ground. All my letters that I write from Russia are published in five or six provincial papers.'

He. 'How?'

I (*counting on my fingers*). 'Let me see. The *Freeman's Journal* of Dublin, the *Manchester Examiner* (it ought to have been the *Glasgow Mail*), the *Scottish Leader* of Edinburgh, the *Dundee Advertiser*, the *Newcastle Leader*, publish simultaneously whatever I shall send from this country.'

(Every now and then there was a slight pause, momentary, but which acted on me as a kind of jerk to a new subject, for fear lest he might rise and declare the audience at an end.) He lit a cigarette, taken from a velvet cigarette case, and smoked, lighting it at a candle that burnt on his table.

I. 'There is one reason why I hope that now our people will begin to take more rational views of the question. You are now alongside of us in India. It is a low way to put it, but it is now more worth our while to be on friendly terms with you than before. For instance, you only need to shake your finger at us across the Afghan frontier, and our people will insist on spending millions. It is for me as an Englishman a most disagreeable position. You can cause us no end of uneasiness and expense without incurring any trouble yourselves. The shadow of a single Cossack on the Afghan frontier may, without causing war, lead us to motion thousands of men and spend millions of money.

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[1] Lord Randolph Churchill had visited St. Petersburg not long before.

If you were animated by revenge it would be unpleasant. But I hope it is not so. For nearly twenty years, ever since I held a pen, I have written ever in one sense, that the friendship of Russia and England was the key to the peace of Asia, and I believe that your Majesty, although perhaps not so vehemently, has always held the same opinion.'

He. 'It is very important.'

I. 'If there is not this friendship what will happen? Endless excitements and expenditure. One day your General Soboleff will publish a stupid article.'

He. 'Oh, General Soboleff.' (Laughing quietly.)

I. 'And then our papers will publish sixteen other articles even more idiotic, for they seem to think in England that they may heap abuse and insult upon injuries, whereas if a Russian writes nonsense, there is no end of indignation.'

Explaining that it was his anxiety to understand the Tsar's policy, 'so as to be the better able to defend it,' Stead proceeded to ask whether there was anything in it which he as an Englishman would find it 'difficult or impossible' to defend.

He. 'I know of nothing, nothing that in our policy is opposed to your interests.'

I. 'There is the case of Bulgaria?'

He. 'Oh, these you have opposed, and perhaps will always oppose. But we want nothing. We do not want to make Bulgaria a Russian province. Of course, M. Ferdinand of Coburg, he will have to go. But he will go very soon, I hope.'

Stead's next question was as to the Straits – the question has a new interest in 1923.

He. 'But there is no such question before us now.'

I. 'No, but it may come, and for me it is very important to know your Majesty's views on the subject. For instance, if I knew now that certain solutions were quite inadmissible, I could say so, and refuse to discuss them as possible. Whereas if I were to advocate what you were afterwards to declare impossible they would be able to quote my arguments against me.'

He. 'Yes.'

I. 'I will explain. Many Russians have said to me, we must have the keys of our own house. That means forts on the Bosphorus to prevent us entering the Black Sea.'

He. 'I never can understand what Constantinople matters to you in England.'

I. 'From the Russophobist point of view it is not difficult to understand.'

He. 'But you have nothing in the Black Sea.'

I. 'No, but it is in this way. The Russophobists say: If the Russians have forts on the Bosphorus, the Black Sea becomes a Russian Lake, as much Russian as Lake Ladoga. You will then fill in with Russian ships of war, iron-clad cruisers, etc. Then some fine day you will open the Bosphorus to your fleets and they will sweep down into the Mediterranean, and destroy our position there.'

He. 'These are not Russian ideas at all.'

I. 'No. But the Russophobist always calculates that some day Russia will join with France. Our position in the Mediterranean is weak as it is. But if from the Black Sea as a Russian Lake comes down a great Russian fleet to join the French fleet, we shall lose the Mediterranean; Malta, Gibraltar, all will go.'

He. 'I do not think so. These are not our ideas at all.'

I. 'No doubt. But they are believed to be. Hence many Englishmen who would not object to your having forts on the Bosphorus to keep an enemy out of the Black Sea, would only consent on condition that we should hold forts on the Dardanelles.'

He. 'It is a difficult question. Why say anything about it now?'

I. '*Now* I do not propose to say anything. But it is well to understand what you regard as possible, or as impossible. Suppose, for instance, Lord Randolph, or some one else proposes such a solution, and says publicly, let the Russians have the key of the Bosphorus, by all means, only let us have the key of the Dardanelles. What should I say? Is that an impossible solution?'

The Tsar hesitated.

I. 'Let me tell you frankly, if I were a Russian, I would say at once, "Never, you shall never have the Dardanelles." And if you are of that opinion I should like to know it now.'

He. 'I do not think it would be possible either for Russia or for England.'

I. 'Well, only let me know. For see how it would go. If I believe that you would allow it, I discuss it as possible, and perhaps the English would come to regard it with favour. Then after public opinion has been educated to accept this solution, you say no, we cannot have the Dardanelles. What happens? All is spoilt, and everyone says: "Confound these Russians, they will take everything and agree to nothing," and all we have said will be quoted against you, and I shall be made a fool of.'

He (*smiling*). 'I see. No, I do not think it is possible, I think it would be impossible both for Russia and for England.'

I. 'All right. If that is so, I shall know where I stand. And I must say again, if I were a Russian I would never allow England to hold the keys of the Dardanelles. You are not master in your own house if you only hold the key of one door of the passage, if some one else holds the keys of the door at the other end.'

He. 'No, it is impossible. I think it is quite impossible.'

I. 'But if we cannot have the Dardanelles, we may have Mitylene, or some island?'

He. 'That is a matter that may be arranged. But the other is impossible.'

Stead next came to the burning question of Afghanistan. The discussion which followed was extremely interesting but does not concern us here. We have seen and heard enough to realize the scene – one of the most curious in Stead's life. The Tsar and he agreed generally regarding Afghanistan, and on the next topic, the need for close friendship between Germany and Russia, they saw eye to eye:

He. 'Yes, Germany and Russia side by side must be friends; it is very important for us to be friends.'

I. 'Yes, that is always my policy, Germany and Russia allies, and England friends of both.'

He. 'Yes, Germany, Russia, England, these together can keep the peace.'

I. 'And Austria.'

He. 'Oh, Austria I look upon as a lost Empire.'

I. 'But the Magyars may make mischief. But, of course, the hope is that Germany may restrain them. I stand before you as before the one man in whose hands lies the peace of Europe. Without you Germany dare not attack France, France dare not attack Germany. And you tell me there will be peace.'

He. 'Peace, peace, yes, we are very peaceful.'

I. 'And there will be no war.'

He. 'I think not for some years as far as we can see.'

I. 'That is indeed good news, the best news I have heard for long. I thank you. The only danger I see depends upon your patience, your forbearance, your good-humour. If you but lose your temper, if you get vexed, and can be patient no longer under all these insults, then millions of men will die in battle. Anything and everything that I could do to help to avert that, I will always be glad to do at any time. I am most grateful to you for having received me so kindly.'

He (*shaking hands*). 'Good-bye, Mr. Stead, it has been a pleasure for me to receive you.'

The typewritten record ends thus, telling us nothing further of the way in which Stead, in defiance of all precedent, brought the talk to a conclusion, instead of ceremoniously awaiting the moment when the Tsar should do so. It was a favourite story of his afterwards. It was the British Ambassador to the Russian Court, Sir Robert Morier, who brought home to him the enormity of his conduct.

'You don't mean to say you dismissed the Tsar?' Morier exclaimed, when Stead told him how the interview had terminated. 'It's perfectly monstrous!'

'Well, I don't know about that,' Stead replied, 'but I knew the Empress had been waiting for her lunch for half an hour. As I had put all the questions I wished to ask, I got up, thanked the Tsar for his patience and kindness, and said I would not detain him any longer.'

'You did, did you?' said Sir Robert. 'Don't you know it was an unpardonable breach of etiquette?'

'I knew nothing about that,' Stead replied. 'I only knew when I saw the Tsar smile that I had been an idiot for my considerateness!'

III

STEAD AS CRITIC OF RUSSIA

Truth about Russia ought to have removed the persistent notion that Stead was blind to Russian faults. Even after reading it, however, many critics persisted in that misconception, communicating it to the immense majority of people who did not read the book, and who seldom read anything. It was in reality a courageously candid book. He took as his motto the aphorism: 'The truths which we least like to hear are those which it is most for our advantage to know'; and some of his chapters were as unpalatable to Chauvinist Russians as was the bulk of it to English Jingoes. To Madame Novikoff it was a 'cask of honey' spoilt by 'a spoonful of tar.'[1]

Madame Novikoff was desperately anxious to refute Stead's criticisms, and asked the Editor of the *Times* to allow her to do so in its columns. His reply deserves to be cited: The *Times* did not propose to review or take any notice of *The Truth about Russia*, he wrote. Its issue of that day (January 8, 1889) contained a letter from another source bearing on the subject of Russian prisons. If Madame Novikoff cared to send a reply to this, it should have the Editor's favourable consideration; 'but he absolutely declines to start a controversy in the columns of the *Times* over Mr. Stead's book.'

That was the attitude of several other London dailies also; to be explained, no doubt, in some measure, by Stead's unpopularity with certain Tory journalists (who knew little of him except through his writing), but chiefly, one imagines, by the annoyance felt in those days by most Englishmen, Liberals and Tories alike, at having praise of Russia forced down their throats. The provincial Press and the weekly reviews, however, were much more generous and much more appreciative of the book's sterling merits. I shall cite one comment only. It is from a long and very favourable review in the *Manchester Guardian*, and it emphasizes what I have said about Stead's candour:

> 'Mr. Stead has by no means shut his eyes to the darker side of the internal condition of Russia. A good deal of his book will not be pleasant reading to Russian officials. It is even doubtful whether the book will pass the Censor in any shape. There is the darker side of the autocracy – its dependence upon an *entourage* too often interested in shutting off the Tsar from the knowledge of facts that reflect upon themselves or their official friends. It is true that every Russian enjoys the right of directly appealing to the Tsar by letter; but "the Tsar's letter-bag " is but an imperfect substitute for eyes and ears. There is the evil genius of the Emperor in the person of M. Pobedonestzeff, the Procurator of the Holy Synod – "Archbishop Laud *redivivus*" – an honest but narrow-minded bigot, whose authority

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[1] She thus characterized it in an article in the *Contemporary Review.*

seems for the moment supreme, and who has unfurled the standard of religious persecution throughout the Empire. The accounts given by Mr. Stead of the abominable treatment accorded to two English residents of the name of Hilton, falsely accused of propagandism, and to Lord Radstock's evangelical followers, the Pashkoffski, reveal intolerance of the worst kind. There are the "Tchinovniks," or officials, eking out inadequate pay by "backsheesh." There is the insufficiency of schools and schooling, the overcrowding of the prisons and prison hospitals; the *laissez aller* and want of enterprise which are the natural results of omnipresent official interference with private affairs. But the heart of Russia is sound and its true pulsations, according to Mr. Stead, beat with their truest health and vigour in the village "Mir." '

And the reviewer proceeds to summarize Stead's informing chapter upon the 'folk-moot' of Russia.

The *Athenæum* took the same view. 'No other foreign writer on Russia,' it declared, 'neither Sir Donald Wallace nor Mr. Hepworth Dixon nor M. Leroy-Beaulieu, has so well described the wickedness of Russian official religious persecution.'

But in spite of the proof of Stead's fearless independence staring them in the face throughout nearly a hundred pages of his book, prejudiced critics continued to harp on the old string. 'Everybody by this time knows how completely he is under the thumb of Russian influence,' repeated one of them; 'Madame Olga Novikoff or any other emissary of the "Great White Tsar" can lay their fingers on his head and play any tune they like on him.' 'In Russia,' declared Mr. G. W. Smalley in the *New York Tribune*, 'Mr. Stead was well received as an English journalist whose motto is "Russia right or wrong." '

Some people are past praying for!

IV

AN OFFICE DISPUTE

Now occurred the first serious difference between Stead and Cook – many readers will be familiar with the version of it given by Cook's biographer. Mr. Saxon Mills strives to be fair, but there are two sides to every such dispute, and he shows himself, as is only natural, more familiar with, and in more sympathy with, Cook's standpoint than with Stead's.

As Mr. Saxon Mills tells us, Stead had been dreaming of the immense impression which his 'Truth about Russia' articles would make in London and on the Continent, and he was indignant when, on returning home, he found that Cook had had them printed in *feuilleton* form, at the foot of the page, and in unusually small type. In a letter dated June 16, obviously written in good faith, and with no realization that he was 'queering the pitch,' Cook had written to Stead to explain his intentions. Stead's correspondence, he intimated, would begin to appear in this new form on the following Monday, and would be continued *de die in diem*, but in smaller instalments than Stead had intended. 'On the other hand,' he added quite innocently, 'the "new style of make-up" will call more attention to it.'

Perhaps I may reprint here the extract from Cook's Diary published in his biography:

'June 25, 1888. – Crisis at *P.M.G.* begins. Stead back on Saturday; travelling straight through he had seen nothing of the way we dished up his articles till he arrived at Queenborough. Blackguarded me strongly – disobeyed his express orders – equivalent to dismissing him from the editorship – was he editor or not, etc.? He had written a leader and a statement explaining that the whole would be begun *de novo*. That afternoon I sent him the following letter:'

And Mr. Saxon Mills gives us in full the characteristically well-reasoned communication in which Cook seeks to defend what he has done.

Now, it may be perfectly true that Cook had acted well within his rights, having – so he maintained – been given 'no instructions whatever' by Stead as to the form in which the articles should be printed, and having been assured by Mr. Yates Thompson that he (Mr. Yates Thompson) had arranged with Stead that 'on this very matter . . . full discretion was to be retained by the office at home'; and it may even be conceded that there really was something to be said, as Cook believed, for the *feuilleton* form decided on, despite the small type used and the insignificant-looking short instalments;[1] but it seems truly astonishing that journalists so experienced as E. T. Cook and Mr. Saxon Mills should have failed to understand not merely Stead's chagrin and disappointment, but also the considerations which justified him to his own mind in adopting a course admittedly 'unprecedented' – that of recommencing the entire series of articles (only a few of which had as yet been used), and presenting them in very legible type, and in instalments sufficiently long to enable readers to follow 'the drift of the argument.' To suppose that he did this in order to inflict 'a sort of public reprimand on his lieutenant,' as Mr. Saxon Mills puts it, sacrificing 'the interests of his paper and its readers for a rather petty revenge,' is altogether absurd. There was no such pettiness in Stead's nature. Those who like may call him a megalomaniac and laugh at him for his notion that his screeds could possibly affect the entire future of Russia and Great Britain, to say nothing of the rest of Europe; but no one has any excuse for attributing to him contemptible motives such as these. The articles in question were intended not just to beguile that 'general reader' whose sentiments Mr. Saxon Mills interprets to us, but to instruct and admonish statesmen and rulers throughout the world – the Tsar of Russia himself most of all. It is unnecessary for me to labour the point because, curiously enough, it has been put with full force by a man peculiarly well entitled to an opinion on the matter. Writing to Stead on June 23, two days before Stead himself knew what was in store for him, Sir Robert Morier expressed himself as follows:

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[1] One of Stead's most unfriendly critics, while condemning the articles themselves, commented also on the 'novel and ridiculous way' in which they were printed.

> 'How could you allow that hideous and unpardonable blunder of the small type at the bottom of the page in the discarded *feuilleton* form? There must have been an enemy sowing tares. You ought to have had a large-type supplement. It will take nine-tenths of the value away from the letters. Not one person in ten ever reads small print, and such small print. Fancy writing for an Emperor and forcing him to read your stuff with a magnifying glass and two extra candles! Monstrous!'

V

STEAD AND CECIL RHODES, THE BEGINNING OF THEIR FRIENDSHIP, APRIL–JULY 1889

Almost from his boyhood, Stead had been keenly observant of South African affairs; in the 'seventies and early 'eighties he had discussed them eagerly with Froude and Lord Carnarvon and others, and he had taken a strong line in regard to Majuba; later he had done what he could to support a missionary named Mackenzie (at this time very conspicuous) in his efforts to place Bechuanaland under the direct authority of the Crown – thus acting in opposition to Cecil Rhodes, who was anxious that it should be controlled by the Government of Cape Colony. It was Rhodes himself, however, who, from the moment of their first acquaintance in 1889, was to make South Africa one of the three or four absorbing and abiding interests of Stead's life.

The meeting took place at the Cape Agency in London on April 4 of that year. 'Please do not forget luncheon at 1.30 on Wednesday to meet Cecil Rhodes, who has much to say that will interest you,' Sir Charles Mills, the Agent-General, had written to Stead on the previous Sunday, 'Mr. Rhodes's communication is of the *first importance.*' Stead, slightly prejudiced against Rhodes over the Bechuanaland question, went to the luncheon somewhat unwillingly, and while the meal lasted he does not seem to have been particularly attracted by his fellow-guest. After lunch Sir Charles withdrew to his office and left the two alone. A letter to Mrs. Stead, written that afternoon, affords us a vivid idea of the conversation which ensued. I give the letter almost in full:

'Mr. Rhodes is my man!

'I have just had three hours' talk with him. He is full of a far more gorgeous idea in connection with the paper than even I have had. I cannot tell you his scheme because it is too secret. But it involves millions. He had no idea that it would cost £250,000 to start a paper. But he offered me down as a free gift £20,000 to buy a share in the *P.M. Gazette* as a beginning. Next year he would do more. He expects to own before he dies 4 or 5 millions, all of which he will leave to carry out the scheme of which the paper is an integral part. He is giving £500,000 to make a railway to Matabeleland, and so has not available, just at this moment, the money necessary for starting the morning paper.

'His ideas are federation, expansion, consolidation of the Empire.

'He is not personally a very prepossessing man (about 35), but full of ideas, and regarding money only as a means to work his ideas.

'He believes more in wealth and endowments than I do. He is not religious in the ordinary sense, but has a deeply religious conception of his duty to the world, and thinks he can best serve it by working for England.

'He took to me. Told me some things he has told to no other man – save Lord Rothschild – and pressed me to take the £20,000, not to have any return, to give no receipt, to simply take it and use it to give me a freer hand on the *P.M.G.*

'It seems all like a fairy dream.

'Here is a strong man, an able man, and I talked to him much about God and guidance, and rather, I think, astonished him by not showing any desire to take his money.

'I think the idea will grow upon him, and he will find the money for the paper.

'He said he had taken his ideas from the *P.M.G.*, that the paper permeated South Africa, that he met it everywhere. I have never met a man who upon Imperial matters was so entirely of my way of thinking.

'How good God is to me.

'I told him that I believed in God, and only regarded wealth as a sign of His will.

'I think that I shall be God's instrument in doing Him good.

'He told me that he tried to see me when I was in gaol, but could not. That my imprisonment made him think that I was the man who would fight for the truth till death, etc., etc. Well, well. So be it, as God wills.

'Remember all the above about R is very private.'

The letter ends with a few lines telling how the libel action brought by a Mr. Irwin against the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which was then in progress, had gone during the day. 'Counsel abused the paper, fearfully,' Stead writes. 'Our Counsel was afraid to defend it. If we get out without heavy damages, it will make it easy for me to leave.[1] If we get hard hit, I don't know what the result will be.' The anxiety caused by this trial had combined with pressure of work to keep Stead in town that night.

Next day the case terminated, going against the *Pall Mall* to the tune of £2,000 damages; and the arrival of Cecil Rhodes upon the scene just at that juncture must have looked more providential than ever. Stead wrote to him recording the verdict, and explaining the situation

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[1] Already at this date Stead had thoughts of leaving the *Pall Mall*.

– would Rhodes enable him to pay the £2,000? This would repair his damaged position as editor.

Chagrined and depressed by the issue of the trial, Stead must have awaited with anxiety Rhodes's reply. Yesterday's 'fairy dream,' as he had called it, must in such a mood have seemed to him too good to be true. Was it credible, he may well have asked himself, that this marvellous fellow, Cecil Rhodes, could really be at his back, whether for the £20,000 which he had felt free to refuse twenty-four hours ago, or for the £2,000 he now needed so urgently?

Perhaps even in that mood of unhappiness Stead knew his man. In any case, there was to be no disillusionment. Next morning's post brought an eight-line answer from the Westminster Palace Hotel in Rhodes's big, bold, untidy scrawl:

'My dear Mr. Stead,

'You can rely on me for what you mention. Let me know when it is required.

Yours faithfully,
C. J. Rhodes.

'P.S. My name is Cecil John.'

The cheque follows in good time, and Rhodes, having polished off this trumpery item of the £2,000, returns at once to the really serious subject of his scheme – a scheme for the extension of British rule in every part of the world through the agency of a small group of active idealists working in close co-operation. 'You must keep my confidence secret,' he warns Stead. 'The idea is right, but, until sure of the lines, would be ruined in too many hands. Your subsidiary press idea can be discussed without risk, but the inner circle behind would never be many, perhaps three or four.'

And after urging Stead to read Crawford's *American Politician*, the brief letter ends: 'I should much like to get any account of Loyola.'

Loyola! We can imagine the feelings with which ninety-nine out of a hundred of Stead's Nonconformist and Church of England supporters at that period would have learnt that he was now to coach his big Imperialistic pupil in the deeds and doctrines of the founder of the Jesuits! But Stead was to keep the whole matter secret for over ten years, and, in common with others, these good people must have become inured to such shocks, when, in October 1899, he at last received Rhodes's permission to expound the project.

This exposition, published originally in the *Review of Reviews*, was reprinted by Stead in 1902 in *The Last Will and Testament of Cecil John Rhodes*, an intensely interesting volume, never very widely known and long out of print. It is as characteristic of Stead in its manner as it is of both men in its matter. Even in small type it would fill fifteen or twenty pages, so I must be content with a greatly condensed version.[1] Here are the opening paragraphs, at least:

> 'Mr. Rhodes's conception of his duties to his fellowmen rests upon a foundation as distinctly ethical and theistic as that of the old Puritans. If you could imagine an emperor of old Rome crossed with one of Cromwell's Ironsides, and the result brought up at the feet of Ignatius Loyola, you would have an amalgam not unlike that which men call Cecil Rhodes. The idea of the State, the Empire, and the supreme allegiance which it has a right to claim from all its subjects, is as fully developed in him as in Augustus or in Trajan. But deep underlying all this there is the strong, earnest, religious conception of the Puritan. Mr. Rhodes is not, in the ordinary sense of the word, a religious man. He was born in a rectory, and, like many other clergymen's sons, he is no great Churchman. He has an exaggerated idea of the extent to which modern research has pulverized the authority of the Bible; and, strange though it may appear to those who only know him as the destroyer of Lobengula, his moral sense revolts against accepting the Divine origin of the Hebrew writings which exult over the massacre of the Amalekites. In the doctrine of eternal torment he is an out-and-out unbeliever. Upon many questions relating to the other world his one word is Agnostic – "I do not know." But on the question of Hell he is quite sure he knows, and he knows that it is not true. Indeed, it is his one negative dogma, which he holds with astonishing vigour and certitude. It conflicts with his fundamental conception of the nature of things. Whatever may be or may not be, that cannot be.
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> 'It may appear strange to those who only realize Mr. Rhodes as a successful empire-builder, or a modern Midas, at whose touch everything turns to gold, to hear that the great Africander is much given to pondering seriously questions which, in the rush and hurry of modern life, most men seldom give themselves time to ask, much less

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[1] Mr. Basil Williams, in his excellent *Life of Cecil Rhodes*, gives only a quite brief summary of it.

to answer. But as Mahommed spent much time in the solitude of his cave before he emerged to astonish the world with the revelation of the Koran, so Cecil Rhodes meditated much in the years while he was washing dirt for diamonds under the South African stars. He is still a man much given to thinking over things. He usually keeps three or four subjects going at one time, and he sticks to them. At present he has on his mind the development of Rhodesia, the laying of the telegraph line to Tanganyika, the Cape to Cairo railway, and the ultimate federation of South Africa. These four subjects preoccupy him. He does not allow himself to be troubled with correspondence. He receives letters and loses them sometimes, but answers them never.

'In the earlier days, before he was known, he kept his thoughts to himself. But he thought much: and the outcome of his thinking is making itself felt more and more every day in the development of Africa.

'When Mr. Rhodes was an undergraduate at Oxford, he was profoundly impressed by a saying of Aristotle as to the importance of having an aim in life sufficiently lofty to justify your spending your life in endeavouring to reach it. He went back to Africa wondering what his aim in life should be, knowing only one thing: that whatever it was, he had not found it. For him that supreme ideal was still to seek. So he fell a-thinking. The object to which most of those surrounding him eagerly dedicated their lives was the pursuit of wealth. For that they were ready to sacrifice all. Was it worth it? Did the end, even when attained, justify the expenditure of one's life? To answer that question he looked at the men who had succeeded, who had made their pile, who had attained the goal which he was proposing he should make his own. What he saw was men who, with hardly an exception, did not know what use to make of the wealth they had spent their lives in acquiring. They had encumbered themselves with money-bags, and they spent all their time in taking care of them. Other object in life they seemed to have none. Wealth, for which they had given the best years of their life, was only a care, not a joy – a source of anxiety, not a sceptre of power. "If that is all, it is not good enough," thought Rhodes.'

Stead proceeds to tell how Rhodes turned his eyes first towards politics, and decided that politics of the Cape Colony order, with

Ministers dependent upon the good will of followers whom they had to wheedle or cajole, 'were not good enough'; and how he then glanced at religion. 'Was there to be found in the Churches a goal worthy the devotion of a life? Perhaps – if it (the Christian faith) were true. But what if it were not? He thought much of the marvellous career of Loyola, the man who underpinned the tottering foundations of the Catholic Church and re-established them on the rock of St. Peter, which had been shaken by the spiritual dynamite of the Reformation. There was a work worthy of the best man's life! But nowadays who could believe in the Roman, or even in the Christian Creed? Rhodes was a Darwinian rather than a Christian. He respected all the Churches with the wide tolerance of a Roman philosopher, but they neither kindled his enthusiasm nor commanded his devotion.'

So Rhodes went on digging for diamonds, 'musing, as he digged, on the sternest verities, the truth which underlies all phenomena.' He was a Darwinian; he believed in evolution. But how if there *were* really a God? All religions, in all times, were in favour of that belief. 'Surely the universal instinct of the race had something to justify it?'

Rhodes argued the matter out in his cool practical way, and decided the question for himself once and for all. Without surrendering his agnostic position, he decided that it was at least 'an even chance' that there might be a God. Further than that he did not go.

And Stead makes the very characteristic comment: 'A fifty-per-cent. chance that there is a God Almighty is very far removed from the confident certainty of "I know that my Redeemer liveth." But a fifty-per-cent. chance God fully believed in is worth more as a factor in life than a forty-per-cent. faith in the whole Christian creed.'

Supposing, then, that there were really a God, what were God's aims and wishes in regard to this terrestrial planet? That was Rhodes's next question. 'If there be a God at all who cares about us, He cares for the whole of us, not for an elect few in a corner. . . . Hole-and-corner plans of salvation, theological or political, were out of court.' The Churches were all very good in their way, but one and all were sectional. The note of catholicity was everywhere lacking – even the Roman Catholic Church touched but a small fragment of mankind. . . . Thus pondering, he went on to reflect upon the natures and achievements of mankind's various races – the Yellow, the Black, the Brown, and the White. If the test of their importance in God's eyes were numerical, the Yellow race came first. If the test were 'the area of the world and the power to control its destinies,' the primacy of the White race was indisputable. . . . 'In the struggle for existence the white race had unquestionably come out on top.'

Proceeding further in his examination of racial characteristics, Rhodes concluded that 'the clue to the Divine purpose' lay in discovering which section of the white race would be most likely to universalize certain broad general principles. Here I must give Stead's text again in full:

> ' "What," asked Mr. Rhodes, "is the highest thing in the world? Is it not the idea of Justice? I know none higher. Justice between man and man – equal, absolute, impartial, fair play to all; that surely must be the first note of a perfected society. But, secondly, there must be Liberty, for without freedom there can be no justice. Slavery in any form which denies a man the right to be himself, and to use all his faculties to their best advantage is, and must always be, unjust. And the third note of the Ultimate towards which our race is tending must surely be that of Peace, of the industrial commonwealth as opposed to the military clan or fighting Empire." Anyhow these three seemed to Mr. Rhodes sufficient to furnish him with a metewand wherewith to measure the claims of the various races of the world to be regarded as the Divine instrument of future evolution. Justice, Liberty, and Peace – these three. Which race in the world most promotes, over the widest possible area, a state of society having these three as corner-stones?
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> 'Who is to decide the question? Let all the races vote and see what they will say. Each race will no doubt vote for itself, but who receives every second vote? Mr. Rhodes had no hesitation in arriving at the conclusion that the English race – the English-speaking man, whether British, American, Australian, or South African – is the type of the race which does now, and is likely to continue to do in the future, the most practical, effective work to establish justice, to promote liberty, and to ensure peace over the widest possible area of the planet.'

And so Rhodes finds the solution to his problem. 'If there be a God, and He cares anything about what I do, I think it is clear that He would like me to do what He is doing Himself. And as He is manifestly fashioning the English-speaking race as the chosen instrument by which He will bring in a state of society based upon Justice, Liberty, and Peace, He must obviously wish me to do what I can to give as much scope and power to that race as possible.' Rhodes's mission in life was 'to paint as much of the map of Africa red as possible,' and to do what he could elsewhere 'to promote the unity and extend the influence of the English-speaking race.' 'Rhodes had found his longed-for ideal,' Stead says in conclusion (writing, be it remembered, in 1899), 'nor has he ever since then had reason to complain that it was not sufficiently elevated or sufficiently noble to be worth the devotion of his whole life.'

It is a singular document, this description of Rhodes's long groping after, and eventual attaining to, a creed. What Stead has here set down so candidly and effectively must always serve, one imagines, as a significant milestone in the progress of religious thought in England. Even in 1899 this sympathetic treatment of his friend's quaint heterodoxy took away the breath of most of his readers. A decade or two earlier such language from the pen of an ardent Protestant would have been unimaginable.

All that absolute certainty about the future Anglo-Saxon predominance over the world should also have its interest for future generations. In whatever degree these racial hopes may be justified or falsified, they can scarcely fail to be discussed and commented on by our descendants. Rhodes, as we know, had been encouraged in them by the *Pall Mall Gazette*; and Stead was not the only foreteller of such an overwhelming Anglo-Saxondom; but where else has the theory found exposition in a form so arresting and so memorable?[1]

With Rhodes's inspiring confidences locked in his breast, Stead was able, we may be sure, to view with more equanimity than would otherwise have been possible for him, his discomforts and disappointments over the *Pall Mall* during the spring and summer of 1889. The breach was widening between him and Mr. Yates Thompson; and E. T. Cook – not at all from any wish to supplant him – was now responsible for most of the editing. In a letter to Rhodes, dated July 8, Stead outlines a fascinating project for himself – an Empire tour; Christmas at the Cape, then India, Burmah, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, returning by Canada and the States – a nine months' journey; and then three months' preparation for a morning paper, of a scope hitherto unknown in the world, to appear in January 1891.

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[1] Stead at that time admitted of no doubt on the subject; later his views changed. See Vol. II, p. 226.

He would take Willie, his eldest son, as his private secretary, and the cost of the trip would be £3,000.

Rhodes was to have visited Hayling Island, already then a favourite holiday resort of Stead's, there to discuss the suggestion. A letter from Lisbon explains, however, that the great man has been suddenly compelled to leave for South Africa. The immense costs that would be involved in the journalistic enterprise, estimated by Stead himself at a quarter of a million, still seem to him quite prohibitive for the time being. But he asks Stead to work out a detailed proposal and to say how much he could reckon on from other sources.

The friendship between the two men had taken firm root, but Rhodes's future millions were never to be at the disposal of Stead's journalistic dreams. Even that tour of the Empire was to remain an aspiration unrealized. Perhaps it was better so, for it was in the winter of 1889 that Stead conceived the venture which was to keep him going so energetically and to such good purpose for the rest of his life – *The Review of Reviews*.

VI

STEAD AND CARDINAL MANNING; 'LETTERS FROM THE VATICAN'

'Letters from the Vatican,' published serially in October and November 1889, constituted Stead's last big effort for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. They added not a little to his reputation at the time, and attracted even wider attention when reissued a few months later in volume form, under the title *The Pope and the New Era*. They were the outcome of that friendship with Cardinal Manning which had begun in July 1885, in connection with the 'Maiden Tribute' articles, and which was to last until the Cardinal's death in January 1892. It was during these seven and a half years that Manning stood out most conspicuously as a historic figure – more conspicuously even than at the period when Disraeli, in *Lothair*, portrayed him as the guest of honour in Apollonia's drawing-room, 'habited in his pink cassock and cape, and waving as he spoke, with careless grace, his pink biretta.' The Cardinal himself looked upon those years as the harvest-time of his long life; in the eyes of his 'authorized biographer,' self-styled, and in those of his successor in the Archbishopric of Westminster, they were something very like his dotage. To a man of Mr. Purcell's mentality, as to an aristocratic ecclesiast like Cardinal

Vaughan, Manning's association with free-thinkers and demagogues like John Burns and Ben Tillett, and his support of the 'odious *Pall Mall Gazette*,'[1] could admit of no other hypothesis. They were matters to be discreetly explained away, if possible, or charitably hushed up – in any case to be lamented.

It is thirty years and more since Manning died. Not many readers under fifty, therefore, can have any personal memory of him, so I shall reproduce here the vivid words in which Stead recorded his first glimpse of the remarkable old man:

'How well I remember the day on which I first saw Cardinal Manning! I had been three years in London, and during all that time – so great a recluse I had been – although I was Mr. Morley's assistant at the *Pall Mall Gazette*, I had never seen the Cardinal. He was a kind of legendary figure to me. Cardinal Grandison in *Lothair* was quite as real to me as the actual Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. At last the time came when I saw him. I was in the hall of Sutherland House – a place famous for many associations mingled of glory and of shame. For the Duchess of Sutherland in old days had been foremost in the fight for the freedom of the slave, and she made her mansion the headquarters of the Abolitionist movement at a time when slavery seemed destined to be eternal on the American Continent. In later days, however, the Duke had made Stafford House the seat and centre of the Jingo reaction in favour of the perpetuation of the slavery of the Christian East. The hostess of Mrs. Stowe,[2] and the patron of the unspeakable Turk, were alike absent on the occasion in question. The annual meeting of the Metropolitan Association for befriending Young Servants was being held in Stafford House, and the Cardinal was present. It was not a scene to be soon forgotten. The representatives of all the philanthropies met at the foot of the staircase of that stately hall to listen to a plea for the little slaveys of London from the lips of the Roman Cardinal and Prince of the Church. When Cardinal Manning rose to speak I was almost aghast at the extreme fleshlessness of his features. His tall form, erect and slender as a spear, showed to great effect above the throng that gathered around the statues at the foot of the stair. I remember no other speaker. I only see the marble and the Cardinal. He spoke with feeling and tenderness, born of evident sympathy for the hard-worked, over-driven little serving-maids of this great city. There was no passion save compassion; he spoke quietly and tenderly, and beyond the drift and tone of his remarks I remember nothing. What impressed me more, and what, I suppose, impresses most of us when we see the Cardinal for the first time, was the extreme bloodlessness of the emaciated face. It was as if wrinkled parchment was stretched across a fleshless skull out of which, however, kindly blue eyes gleamed brightly, while a pleasant smile gave life and human humour to the features of the ascetic.'

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[1] Purcell, from whose book this epithet is cited, dismisses the whole of Manning's connection with Stead in half a dozen intolerant lines.

[2] Mrs. Beecher Stowe, authoress of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

A strange enigma, the great Cardinal! Reading these lines one recalls the unpleasant portrait of him painted by Mr. Lytton Strachey – the portrait by which he is best known to-day.[1] If Mr. Strachey's view of him be the right one, there can seldom have lived a more disagreeable egoist; and it is difficult to point to a single untrue statement or extravagant deduction in any one of the pages of that accomplished *Advocatus Diaboli*. Yet Mr. J. E. C. Bodley [2] who, like Stead, was long on terms of intimacy with the Cardinal, speaks of him as the one really good man whom he has known; and Mr. Bodley, as this very phrase suggests, is not a prey to many illusions. Stead had illusions innumerable, but one hesitates to include among them his belief in Manning. How are we to reconcile the two pictures? – the sinister likeness reconstructed for us with such painstaking and persuasive art by the student who never set eyes on the original, and the Cardinal as his two friends knew him, meeting him and talking with him, month after month, week after week, day after day – the good, kind, sympathetic, gentle-mannered, warm-hearted man whom Mr. Bodley still venerates, and to whom we find Stead writing in a letter of this period: 'You have indeed been a father to me when father I had none. May God bless you and keep you ever near His heart, so that you may always be to others as you have ever been to me, a message of God, a minister of His Holy Spirit, helping us all to realize something of the mind that was in Christ Jesus!'

* * *

It is really surprising how little *The Pope and the New Era* has lost in interest. Leo XIII, that most impressive of modern pontiffs, is seldom mentioned nowadays, and of all the Cardinals and Monsignori with whom the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* held such unusual converse, the name of Rampolla alone is well remembered. But the Vatican has a perennial fascination for all to whom the Roman Church is not anathema, and Stead's impressions of the Papal Court are unique. The Holy See had never before been visited in quite this spirit – and never will be again!

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[1] In *Eminent Victorians*.

[2] The author of the famous book on France. See his volume, *Cardinal Manning and Other Essays*.

The absolute candour of the book is one of its principal charms. It begins thus :

'In the following pages I attempt to discuss one of the greatest of all problems with, perhaps, as slender an equipment of qualification for the task as ever was possessed by mortal man. By heredity, by education, and by the associations and habits of a life-time, I am cut off as by a mental and moral abyss from the Church of Rome. Reared as a child on *Fox's Book of Martyrs* – fascinated in my youth with the revolutionary enthusiasms that convulsed Europe in the year of my birth, I have spent my working life in editing Radical newspapers – an occupation which left me neither leisure not inclination for the studies necessary to enable me to appreciate the history of the past, or to command that gift of tongues without which it is impossible to converse in the present. It may, indeed, be said that my only qualification was such an utter absence of all semblance of qualification as to render it impossible for me to fall into the delusion of imagining that I knew enough about anything to exempt me from the duty of listening patiently and attentively to every one who could speak with authority upon the questions at issue.

'The key to all right understanding is true sympathy, and, so far as it is impossible for anyone to sympathize, so far it is impossible for him to understand. Hence the almost insuperable difficulties that beset me on my road to Rome. Not even the constant and helpful presence of friends whom I loved and respected, but whose religious convictions I could not share, could overcome the keen antipathies naturally excited by the political heresies and theological superstitions that seem to be rampant in Rome. When one's forefathers have died in battle, and perished at the stake, in protest against a system which, by the inexorable logic of the law of its existence, would, if it ever again had the chance, drive you into armed revolt if it did not stifle you by irresistible force, it is somewhat difficult to cultivate that sympathy without which the wisest of men can never obtain an inside view of the realities of the Church. Nevertheless, it is the condition of success, and – so far as I may have been able to obtain any clear insight into the problem which I went to Rome to study – it is due to the resolute endeavour which I honestly made to overcome the prejudices of a life-time, and to examine the facts in a spirit of that charity which hopeth all things, and of a faith which revolts against the notion that a Church which to two hundred millions of our fellow creatures is the sole fount of Christian teaching has been utterly disinherited of God.'

Stead had often been assailed for the interest which he had always taken in the Pope. The Church of Rome, most of his friends assured him, was 'retrograde, reactionary, persecuting, and the worst enemy of spiritual religion.' To all which representations he replied:

'Well, if so, what then? Under its colours march two hundred millions of our brothers and sisters. What is to be our attitude in relation to them? Can we excommunicate from our sympathies so vast a human host, or only regard them as a field for Protestant or free-thinking propaganda? The propaganda, so far as it is religious, has not made much progress since the days of Loyola, nor does the mere labelling this myriad "To be converted hereafter" help us much either to the ending or the mending of the Catholic Church. Granted that the Roman division does not march in the van, is that any reason why we should not do what we can to encourage by our sympathy the more energetic spirits to quicken the pace? In the onward march of Humanity towards the Ideal we cannot afford to ignore even the laggards in the rear. It may be, of course, that the utmost that outsiders can do by sympathy and encouragement will only produce an infinitesimal effect upon the dense and somewhat inert mass of the Catholic world. That is not my opinion. But however infinitesimal it may be, it will at least be greater than that which is produced by intolerant denunciation of the whole system. There is great truth in the homely adage that you can catch more flies by a spoonful of honey than by a hogshead of vinegar, and it would not be amiss if our vehement polemists were to read anew the familiar fable about the contest between the sun and the wind as to which could most easily rid the traveller of his cloak. When people are damning each other daily, they are not very likely to excite each other to emulation in good works. Why are so many Protestants cased as in triple brass against all the influences – good or bad – that emanate from Rome? Surely it is because of the intolerance of the system against which they protest. Can they not see that their own intolerance produces exactly the same effect on those against whom it is directed, and that if they wish to permeate Catholicism with the Modern Spirit, the representatives of the Modern Spirit should not uniformly approach the Church in the mood of an executioner eager to drag his victim to the gallows? Excommunication is the worst instrument of conversion, although, alas! excommunication is the favourite weapon of mankind – whether it is exercised with the accompaniment of bell, book and candle, or couched in the disdainful sneer of a philosopher, or thundered from the platform of Exeter Hall.'

Those who had to deal with the real and living forces of the world, Stead proceeded to urge, could not ignore the influence of the Church of Rome, whether for good or for evil. Like a mighty river which drained a continent, it could not be destroyed. It might be drying up – but, if so, the process was so slow as to be imperceptible:

'Huge mud banks may have choked its channel, rendering it unnavigable; snags may abound; the whole stream, whether as motive force or irrigating source or inland waterway, may have become utterly waste; but so long as it exists it must be reckoned with, and, if possible, utilized. Opinions may differ as to how far it can be utilized, but something more can surely be made of it, from a purely secular point of view, than we are making of it to-day. Such, at least, has long been my hope – a hope which is deepening into a conviction. This is not a dream of yesterday with me.'

And he proceeds to cite some passages from an article which he had published in the *Universal Review* in December 1888, and in which he had developed at some length his idea of the 'new Catholicity' dawning upon the world, with the Pope in the van of progress.

The first two or three articles containing these passages brought Stead a flood of correspondence, extracts from which he printed in the book. Two of the most interesting comments were from an English Nonconformist, Mr. Hugh Price Hughes, and a Belgian sceptic, the eminent writer, M. de Laveleye. The former deplored Stead's mission as ill-judged and mischievous, the latter derided it amicably as a wild-goose chase. 'You know nothing of the spirit of Catholicity,' M. de Laveleye wrote, 'if you can imagine that the Pope can play the *beau rôle* which you have sketched out as a possibility of the future'; and he goes on to portray Leo XIII, for whose personality Stead was full of admiration, as an 'unscrupulous opportunist.' Stead was not deterred. It was this same Leo who 'sent Cardinal Lavigerie to revive the crusade against the Slave Trade, and who supported Cardinal Manning's action in the great strike for the dock labourers.' He persists, therefore, in his hopes, though prepared for the possibility of disillusionment.

How the process of disillusionment began in Paris, at the Gare de Lyon,[1] and continued during at least the earlier part of Stead's stay in Rome, I must leave the reader to find out from the pages of the book. There can be no harm at this time of day in revealing the identity of the 'tall, elderly ecclesiastic,' also bound for Italy, whom Stead had for travelling-companion. He was the Very Rev. Abbot Smith, Judge of the Holy Office of San Celeste – in Stead's eyes a reactionary of the very worst type. 'If he is a sample of the men they breed in Rome, then the Lord have mercy on St. Peter's Chair!' he exclaimed a few days after his arrival, in a letter to Cardinal Manning. 'He is intelligent, powerful, and horrible. He stands for Authority with a capital *A*, and his one regret was that our Government did not call out the soldiers to disperse the Dockers' procession by force of arms.'

Stead and the Cardinal were in frequent correspondence while these 'Letters from the Vatican' were appearing in the *Pall Mall*. On points of diplomacy and tact Stead sought and welcomed his venerable friend's criticism, and the Cardinal saw some of the letters in proof. 'I have struck out one passage,' he writes to Stead on November 23, 'for it would do harm to everything and everybody. . . . You must not write like a dare-devil.' And he proceeds: 'Do not lecture the Pope, nor recount "rebuffs" which, after all, may be like the buffeting of His Master, by Divine permission and for a greater good.' A few days later he twits Stead with 'want of actuality' in making such complaints as that the Vatican is ill-informed through ignorance of English. English is not in the least essential, he declares: 'The whole Episcopate in all countries is in close correspondence with Rome in Latin, Italian, and French. Every week my Secretary and I write in these languages on all manners of business. . . . If the Pope is not polyglot, Rome is. . . . If *you* had been polyglot you would not have failed to know all this and that the affairs of the Vatican are more accurately treated than the affairs of our Foreign Office.'

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[1] The first two letters were introductory and written in London.

Despite much that was to him disedifying, Stead was able to conclude his inquiry on a hopeful note:

'I have not felt in the least the fascination of Rome (he declared in his last letter). Never was I less inclined to join the Papal Church than when I stood beneath the dome of St. Peter's. The great organization at the centre of which I stood, filled me with no sense of its supernatural wisdom or of its superhuman weight. On the contrary, the chief conviction which was borne in upon my mind, on looking at the Papacy more closely, was a sorrowful sense of the lamentable chasm which had yawned between the Church and the vital realities of modern life. It is time the church came down to earth again, and saw that even in order to save souls from hell it is well to take more pains about getting the will of God done now and here on earth as it is in heaven. There is nothing like a vivifying contact with solid facts and the immutable laws which govern our visible life to indoctrinate the Church with the scientific spirit, to enable it to slough its abuses and to bring its quaint anachronisms up to the time of day. There are many things I do not like about the Church. There are many of the dogmas that seem to be utterly incredible; its exaggeration of the virtues of celibacy is simply lamentable; and if it were strong enough it would probably deem it necessary to burn me at the stake as it burned Giordano Bruno. But it is necessary to be charitable even to those who would roast you, and tolerant of those who are intolerant of you. And no amount of prejudice can prevent my seeing that there is great good in the Church, and that there are possibilities in it of much greater good than any which it has yet realized. The problem is how best to develop the good and eliminate the bad. Surely the solution is not difficult. How can you drive out the darkness better than by letting in the light? How can you keep the unfruitful works of empty ceremonials and idle services from encroaching upon the time and the minds of the faithful, otherwise than by cultivating the fruitful works of philanthropy?'

The following very Stead-like sentences bring the series of letters to an end:

'When I left Rome night had fallen over the Campagna, but the summer lightning was playing in splendour over the summits of the Alban Hills. It was brilliantly beautiful. The whole western sky was lit up with the lambent flame, which leaped from peak to peak of the silent hills, as if the ghosts of the old volcanoes were revisiting the craters from which the fiery lava had long ages since rolled hissing towards the sea. But no thunder followed the lightning; it was but a splendid display of celestial pyrotechny, which enabled me to gain another glimpse of the wooded hill behind whose precipitous slope slept the cool and limpid waters of the Alban Lake. It seemed no inapt vision writ in fiery characters across the darkening sky of the present condition of the Catholic Church. Her anathemas are but as summer lightning compared with those dread bolts which hissed and flamed from the Pontiffs who climbed in Peter's chair to wield Jove's thunder. But, although the volcano has long been extinct, deep in the heart of the mighty crater there lies, like the waters of the Alban Lake, a great store of Christian love and human sympathy, which may yet be made available for quenching the thirst of the world. The old aqueducts are almost as badly broken as those which once brought water to Rome; but the water is there, and the aqueducts may be repaired. Is it not worth while to try?'

'One of the best things of its kind ever done,' Harold Frederic, himself a journalistic craftsman of the first order, and no friend to Stead, declared of this series of articles, and many other critics were equally appreciative; but they were read, of course, by all sections of the religious world with mingled feelings, in which disapproval predominated. The Nonconformists, for the most part, condemned them outright, and they were scarcely less unpalatable to the average member of the Church of England. The rumour even gained currency that Stead was going to become a 'Papist,' but Roman Catholics saw no symptoms in him of conversion. *The Universe* remarked that he was as much a heathen as ever he was, and *The Month*, the organ of the Jesuits, while recognizing his goodwill, declared that there were 'few men on the face of the earth so remote from real sympathy with the objects, aims, or real character' of the Church of Rome.

In conclusion I may transcribe the note with which, in February 1890, he sent a copy of his book to the Cardinal:

'Dear Cardinal Manning,

'I send you herewith my book *The Pope and the New Era*, which may be said to owe its being to you. For that there could be any relations between the Pope and the New Era excepting those of war to the knife is an idea which would never have gained possession of the popular mind but for your life work.

'Whether you are not somewhat of a white blackbird in the Church is now the only question. But it is an immense change to have it admitted that even sometimes a "blackbird" may be white. With sincerest respect and affection,

Yours faithfully,
(*Signed*) W. T. Stead.'

VII

STEAD RESIGNS

The beginning of the end of Stead's regime was foreshadowed in an exchange of letters between Editor and Assistant Editor early in August 1889, over the Infectious Diseases Bill, which was before the House of Commons. 'If this Bill is to be slain,' Cook wrote to Stead, 'you must slay it.' For Cook himself, after going carefully into the whole subject, had found himself on the Bill's side. The letter ended thus: 'Garrett, I may add, as an Old Hospital Hand, says he would far rather be compulsorily removed to a hospital than take his chance at lodgings.'

It was a quiet, well-reasoned letter, to the tone of which Stead could not possibly have objected, in ordinary circumstances, but, coming just now, it evidently put him out a good deal. On its first page he jotted down the substance of his answer: 'Replied that in my altered position on the paper, I could only ask him to be silent on a subject on which for fifteen years I have held strongest views.' And he added the gloomy reflection: 'Another nail in my *P.M.G.* coffin.' Cook in his turn was distressed. He had not meant to express himself aggressively, he explained, but merely to show that he could not be trusted to show Stead's view in the matter. Would not Stead, he went on to ask, write the article himself even now?

On October 1, 1889, Stead's existing agreement with Mr. Yates Thompson was to come to an end. On September 25, in pursuance of a talk on the subject, Mr. Thompson put into writing his proposal for a new arrangement by which Stead's salary was to be £1,000 a year in future, instead of £1,200, 'with three months' notice on either side as before'; he proceeded to emphasize the need of greater willingness on Stead's part to consult others when emergencies arose 'specially enlisting his sympathies.' It was essential for the paper, he declared, to regain the confidence of the public, so as to occupy again the position which it held in the spring of 1885.

Stead preserved an autograph copy of his reply, dated September 27. He accepted the new terms, on condition:

1. That he was allowed to conduct the 'syndicate business' in future on his own account. Against this is pencilled – '*Refused.*' By the 'syndicate business' he meant a further development of the arrangement which had been resorted to in the case of 'Truth about Russia,' for the publication of articles in a number of other newspapers simultaneously with their appearance in the *Pall Mall.*

2. That a fortnight should be at once devoted to visits to the chief provincial towns for the purpose of a thorough-going inquiry into the problem of 'distribution,' the whole staff of the *P.M.G.* being agreed, he declared, that the paper's unsatisfactory sales were due not to its contents but to inadequate distributing methods. Against this is pencilled – '*Strongly objected to.*' 'Incidentally,' Stead went on to urge, 'the half-penny morning paper project' might be further considered. Against this is pencilled: '*Pooh-poohed.*'

The pencillings summarize Yates Thompson's decisions. In the latter's reply next day, he combated the theory that the distribution was at fault – it had been no better, he maintained, in the first half of 1885, when the circulation of the *P.M.G.* stood at an average of over 12,250, having risen from an average of about 8,360 at the date when Stead became Editor. What they really needed was a return to better methods in conducting the paper. As for the 'syndicate business,' the profits therefrom could not yet be calculated, but, if it proved a success, whoever had the main hand in working it might reasonably expect that his services 'would be recognized by an increase of salary.'

It was to show that he was influenced by *bonâ fide* distress and alarm at risks already taken and losses incurred, Mr. Yates Thompson explained, that he had been obliged to propose the reduction of salary, but he was prepared to make it good at the end of the year by adding a payment of £200 down in one sum if the 'conditions of caution now agreed to' were consistently carried out: as to this he himself must, of course, be the judge. He would be prepared to do this also at the end of subsequent years. Meanwhile, he was sanguine that things would take a more favourable turn.

So things were left until December 10, when Stead wrote to Mr. Thompson to say that he had arranged to edit a new monthly magazine to be published by Mr. Newnes – the future *Review of Reviews*.

Mr. Thompson replied by return of post that he wished Stead had consulted him first, for he would certainly have said at once what he was obliged to say now: that the editing of such a magazine was 'quite incompatible with editing the *P.M.G.*' He was, of course, always open to conviction on this or any other matter, but he saw no prospect of being able to see his way 'to going shares in the editor of the *P.M.G.* with Mr. Newnes of *Tit-Bits*.'

On December 13, Stead and Mr. Thompson had a long talk together at which each was able, apparently, to express himself freely and satisfactorily. It resulted in an understanding that Stead should leave the *P.M.G.* on either January 1, 1890, or, if for any reasons it should suit him better, on April 1. This arrangement was recorded in a more genial letter from Mr. Yates Thompson, dated December 14. After their conversation, he recognized, he said, that for the last twelve months there had been 'serious misapprehension' on both sides; and if Stead elected to stay on until April he saw no reason why the next three months should not be much more satisfactory to both parties.

As things turned out, Stead severed his connection with the paper at the end of the year. It was a wrench for him, but it had become inevitable, and at least he was parting with Mr. Yates Thompson upon not unamicable terms. That was a satisfaction to him; and an extremely cordial letter from Mrs. Thompson, charmingly expressed, must have gone a long way towards healing any sense of bitterness that still existed in his mind.

CHAPTER 14

STEAD AND HIS *P.M.G.* STAFF, 1887–89

I

WHAT HIS STAFF THOUGHT ABOUT HIM

STEAD's relations with his *Pall Mall* staff during these closing years of his editorship appear to have been pleasant in the extreme. There was, of course, the occasional clash of temperament inevitable in any newspaper office: everyone worked at high pressure and under conditions, as we shall presently learn, far from comfortable; there was no immunity from small jealousies and dissatisfactions and disputes; but, on the whole, real happiness prevailed in that dingy old building in Northumberland Street. Stead, it is clear, was a splendid man to work under, kind, thoughtful, tolerant, encouraging, inspiring. We have seen what Lord Milner, glancing back at the earlier period, has had to say of him. Let us look at him now through the eyes of some of his new associates.

The two with whom he had, perhaps, most in common – the two, certainly, who were to prove themselves his most devoted disciples, were Edmund Garrett and J. W. Robertson Scott: the latter joined the staff in 1889 only, the former had belonged to it since the summer of 1887. 'Behold the new Stead,' Milner is reported to have exclaimed in July of that year, after reading one of Garrett's first contributions to the *Pall Mall*. 'Behold the new Stead, with all his virtues and none of his faults!' It was Stead himself who used oftenest to recall the saying. I think he felt that, jestingly as the estimate was phrased, it was essentially true. Certainly he and Garrett had curiously strong resemblances; Garrett had in him infinitely more of the artist, and he was far better educated. As to these two points, there could, I think, be no dispute; and in one or two other respects, also, Milner's view was open to question. Stead's co-religionists, for instance, though recognizing Garrett's sterling goodness, his really noble character, will have deplored his agnosticism, while devotees of Theosophy and Spiritualism must have thought him lamentably lacking in Stead's open-mindedness. Apart from religion, however, and from what most people dismissed as 'crazes,' Garrett was, undoubtedly, something very like 'a new Stead' – just the same blend of Social Reformer, Sane Imperialist, and Champion of Women: doubling the rôles, too, in just Stead's own way, of the journalist of ardour and genius, exultant when he could distance all competitors, and the warm-hearted, dauntless crusader, ready to risk everything for his cause.

The story of Edmund Garrett's all too brief career has been admirably told in the Memoir written by E. T. Cook. All lovers of Stead should read that charming and moving biography – I shall have occasion to refer to it again. Here I shall reproduce merely the passage from an early chapter in which Cook describes for us Garrett's first pilgrimage to the *P.M.G.* office:

> 'Garrett, after finishing his Tripos at Cambridge in the summer term in 1887, presented himself, aged twenty-two, at the office of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, then in Northumberland Street, and asked for work. Mr. Stead, most accessible of editors, received him kindly, but had no opening on his staff and was very busy. For once he was in no mood to talk, even to so very pleasant-spoken a young man; but his visitor had come for an interview, and meant to have it. Since the great man showed no disposition to play the interviewer, his caller assumed the part himself, and settling himself comfortably in the chair drew the editor on into general conversation. He left the office with no promise of work or encouragement other than such as an interview with so genial an editor might inspire. "I saw he didn't think much of me," said Garrett afterwards; "why should he? A pasty-faced undergraduate who thought he wrote verses!" He returned to Cambridge, and spent the evening in composing, in the style so far as might be of Mr. Stead himself, an "Interview with the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*." It was posted to the Editor, who perceived at once that here was a young man of spirit and audacity, wielding moreover the pen of a ready and picturesque writer. Garrett was sent for, and was given a commission for a descriptive article. This was the beginning of a connection with the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and with its offshoot the *Westminster*, which, with interruptions from ill-health, lasted for eight years.'

Stead preserved that interview which was posted to him from Cambridge. It is an amateurish production, marked by very little of the wit and skill and originality which were to make Garrett afterwards a past-master in the interviewer's art; and the touches of personal portraiture in it are few and insignificant: we are told of Stead's 'deep, decided voice,' and how he threw himself into a chair by the fire-place, 'extending his feet against the mantelpiece,' and 'settling himself into the most human and least impressive of attitudes'; but we get from it no other graphic impressions. Its chief interest lies in the zest with which the sympathetic and admiring pupil draws out his teacher. Almost in a minute he has Stead well launched upon his great theme – the illimitable range of a journalist's powers and responsibilities. There are reminiscences, too, and searching questions and characteristic warnings and words of counsel. . . . To the boyish listener it was all like a long draught of champagne.

That was the beginning of Garrett's association with Stead on the *P.M.G.* A letter addressed to his Chief in December 1889, tells us something of how it closed. He has heard with dismay that Stead's editorship is about to end, and begs to be allowed to help, 'at however poor a salary,' on whatever new enterprise there may be in view. 'Mr. Cook and Mr. Thompson,' he writes, 'have both been extremely kind to me, but I'm afraid that my work will be such poor stuff without you to keep it alive, that they would be only too glad to release me from my engagement. It is entirely thanks to you that I am where I am. I cannot imagine what it will be like without you!'

Garrett's resemblances to Stead were mental and moral only, not physical, as his portrait attests. Young Robertson Scott, on the other hand, a big, bony, muscular 'black Celt' from the Cumberland Border, must have had a good deal about him of the North Country aspect and manner which made Stead, also, look so unlike the ordinary London journalist. How warmly he entered into Stead's enthusiasms and ideas will be apparent from the vivid memories which follow. The author of *The Foundations of Japan*, and of the many excellent publications associated with the pseudonym 'Home Counties,' has won for himself a very wide audience, but he can, I think, have written few pages more interesting than these:

'As a youth I came into touch with Stead by enthusiastically rewriting from his own articles his Gospel of Journalism, and by my exceptional good fortune, for an obscure provincial, in getting into the *P.M.G.* "followers"[1] with a Steadian flavour in their headlines. I heard afterwards how Stead amused the office by his account of the first interview I had with him. With audacious innocence I had pulled out a big notebook containing a long list of possible articles and had worked through the lot with poised pencil, gravely ticking off the titles of those he "ordered." He was equally amused by the way in which I had straightly interrogated him on his personal feelings towards Madame Novikoff, Chamberlain and the Prince of Wales (King Edward). My recollections of this meeting are of his piercing blue eyes, of his urging me to be perfect in French and German, of his talking a little through his nose, sometimes with his feet on the mantelpiece, and sometimes as he stalked about, but always beating his legs with a long-handled clothes-brush.

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[1] Articles following the leader. The original *P.M.G.* was a large foolscap, and the first page was occupied by cheap advertisements, the leader and the beginning of the follower-on.

'Those were the days when one was paid by the *P.M.G.* in cheques on thick paper of abnormal area, when there were no schools of journalism, and industrious young men with a zest for writing and an eye for live subjects could, once past the barriers, get commissions enough. Lord Northcliffe has described the conventionalities of the daily press when the *Daily Mail* burst upon Fleet Street, but the conservatism and rigidity of the *P.M.G.* period are past belief nowadays.

'Stead's conception of the journalist as the "Sandalphon of humanity" kindled a fire in the hearts of a few young men who, if they lacked the attainments of the *P.M.G.* editor, had some of his glow and strenuousness. They were minded to enter journalism as some entered the Church. When Stead wrote to ask me how soon I could come up to London to join the staff, I wired, "To-morrow."

'There may have been less convenient, darker and dirtier daily paper offices in London than our old building, but I never heard of them. Northumberland Street had memories of John Morley's august rule, of the Thames water that invaded the machine room before the building of the Embankment and of the Frederick Greenwood days of a minute circulation in which messages are fabled to have been sent down "to work off another half-quire." I do not think we possessed more than two tape machines (including the "City" one), and I cannot remember a telephone, though I suppose we must have had one. Few editions got out to time if Stead was in the office. I remember his keeping us late one afternoon during the Dock strike – for 6*d*. an hour! – with an account he had written of a John Burns speech at Tower Hill. "I see," he reported Burns as declaiming, "I see rising above the horizon the full round orb of the docker's tanner." But the *P.M.G.*, in spite of coming out late, and in spite of its worn type and antiquated machines, was read and quoted. The business side was a meagre, minor department somewhere upstairs, from which there was now and then heard a blast over the trains we missed.

'Something of the man Stead was may be seen in his extraordinarily characteristic handwriting. There is such grit, vigour and industry in it that his penholders must have been squeezed out of all shape and his nibs have had but a short life. He was one of the first users of a fountain pen.

'Not only Stead's physical and mental animation and the warmth of his blood are exhibited in his handwriting but his inartistic side. His insensitiveness was illustrated in the cover of his *Review of Reviews*, in the format of his *Daily Paper*, in the get-up of all his publications indeed, and in his clothes – I once saw him in the office in a shirt, tied with a tassel at the neck, that looked like a pyjama jacket. Some of his following was no doubt blind on that side too, and a man is judged by the following he attracts.

'Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch might find in Stead's articles most of the "jargon" with which he wars. But Sir Arthur would be the first to repudiate the notion that no man may write who is careless about split infinitives and "in the case of" and is indifferent to rare literature which may ". . . glad a few high souls once in a century."

'Stead's strength of conviction, his fervour, his sense of effectual calling, his consciousness of ability in his profession, his untiring industry and curiosity, his faculty for enlisting all his powers, and his drilling in the Bible and in Bunyan and Milton gave him an effectiveness as a writer for the day which eclipsed all faults of style and some errors of taste. I have the Bible that Stead used at the *P.M.G.* It has holes in it where the scissors of an editor "with no feeling for books," have pounced into it for a favourite text for that leader which was always being written against time. Stead's godlier following would have been aghast had they had a sight of these mutilated Scriptures, but Stead, though he knew and valued the Bible as much as any of them, revolted at the sanctimonious. He was on as easy terms as Cromwell with his Bible and his God. The religious folk who followed "that good man Stead" got shocks. But not more shocks than were received by the ungodly who came along with him because he was a political force, and found themselves in the company of a personage who cared as little for the *convenances* as Ezekiel.

'The *P.M.G.*, in spite of the endeavours of Cook and Garrett, was often, as I say, a scorn to the literary persons. But Stead had his niceties. Within the first few weeks of my novitiate in the office he opened the shutter in the wall which divided his writing den from the room in which I worked and demanded to know what I meant by writing "the *P.M.G.* man" in a few lines of chat I had had with a celebrity.

'Ruskin was not the only master of letters who overlooked Stead's literary infelicities in appreciation of his moral and public purposes. Ruskin was indeed a frequent correspondent for publication on or for private counsel. On one occasion he sent to the office a copy of the *P.M.G.* – now, alas, lost – with almost every item in it re-headed, or marked to be cut down or omitted or to occupy greater space or a more prominent position.

'I have never known anyone who united moral and physical courage in the same degree as Stead. To him the trite phrase, "He feared no foe," might be fully applied. The way in which he successively risked his reputation over the Criminal Law Amendment Act, by his sympathies with Russia when Russia had few interpreters, by his deference to the Salvation Army at a time when good men spoke rudely of the Booths; in his parleyings with "spooks" – his own word – and in his unflinching stand against the Boer War, must be held in grateful remembrance by every journalist who is worthy of a profession members of which throw up their posts on points of conscience much oftener than parsons.

'That a man had abused the Editor of the *P.M.G.* thoroughly would not in the least prevent Stead from going to see him or offering him an opportunity to contribute. It is not easy to credit how scurrilous were the attacks after the "Maiden Tribute." Stead had stirred ugly depths in more than one part of London life. When at the starting of the *Review of Reviews*, Yates Thompson refused "to share his editor with Mr. Newnes of *Tit-Bits*," it was pleasantly suggested that Stead had got capital out of the headquarters fund of the Salvation Army. I heard him reply to the suggestion that he should bring a libel action: "I would not take legal proceedings if it were stated that I had not only killed my grandmother but eaten her."

'Stead was big. He would have welcomed to his sanctum with equal vivacity and the office cup of tea, Gabriel and Judas, and on their departure would have at once dictated two of those marvellously accurate interviews of his.

'It may be suggested that Stead pursued Parnell and Dilke with bitterness. Stead's crusades, like his Maiden Tribute, may be fairly judged by those only who are able to reconstitute his era. I remember having myself to call before breakfast one morning on the Chief of the Metropolitan Police to make inquiries regarding two M.P.'s who had simultaneously fled the country on charges of immorality, and I also recall the death in a brothel of a judge of the High Court. Stead's was a day in which a hypocritical opposition to Bradlaugh taking his seat in Parliament, a mirthful attitude towards the elementary rights of women and girls, a patronage of the United States, a ghastly pro-Sublime Porte policy, the densest ignorance of the Colonies and of Asia, and a general stodginess and complacency in the press and public life, did not disturb most of the educated electorate. Not irony, not literary rapier fighting, but the plain speaking of the prophets and a pen tipped with flame were the fit equipment for a struggle with thick heads and dull hearts.

'In judging some of Stead's attitudes, it must be borne in mind that, though no contemporary editor had worked harder at self education, knew more persons of mark, more persistently sought sound information in his own country and on the continent, or did more on a basis of knowledge to modify opinion in European politics or to instruct the public regarding Briton overseas, Stead's up-bringing and adult life were in some respects narrow. It was not until some years after he left Northumberland Street that he paid his first visit to a theatre. He was an ardent Spenserian but a whole world of fancy was closed to him. No one who caught Stead's piercing glance, no one who has looked at his portrait or is fully acquainted with the volume, the range, and the verve of his work, can doubt that he was a man of unusual force, gifts and character. But he was not in the ordinary sense an intellectual man – is it not Froude who says that the intellectual man does no fighting? – he knew nothing of music, pictures were not much more to him than illustrations, and with many phases of life he had no contact. But he was a good man, a generous man, a man of merit in many of the ways in which merit may be fairly reckoned. A maker of paths, a breaker of bonds, an unsparing worker, a patriot of a valuable sort, a fine citizen and friend, a man rooted in integrity, one of the ablest journalists the world has seen, a joyous colleague, an unselfish lover: one of the men who are remembered after their death with affection by men and women of many creeds, parties and ranks, remembered not only for their kindnesses and their character but for their helpful life in that, being in Ephesus, they gallantly sought out the lions to destroy them.

'At no point are biographers so futile, Havelock Ellis goes the length of saying with characteristic sagacity, "as in toning down, glozing over or altogether ignoring those weaknesses, defects and failures which are the very hall-mark of genius." Stead's extravagancies and credulities, crudities and trumperies, if you like, will soon be forgotten. It is easy to write that, and it is true. But I would rather write that in forming an estimate of Stead his weaknesses should not be forgotten. What is to be remembered of him – just to him and of help to those who come after him – is: Bound up though his nature was with weakness, he ran his course courageously. We do not learn that the good and faithful servant, who received his "Well done" and entered into joy, was faultless.

'For the work Stead had to do for his time it is not easy to see that he could have been any different from what he was. His whole way of life was not that which many would have chosen. But it seemed right to him. He was a little turbulent, spectacular, melodramatic, but how few of us have left adolescence completely behind?

'What we may say is that Stead recalled Thompson's aspirations:

"Oh for the flushed excitement of keen strife!
For mountains, gulfs and torrents in my way,
With perils, anguish, fear and strugglings rife!
For friends and foes, for love and hate in fray –
And not this lone, flat, torpid life."

'Stead lacked the poise, balance and judgment often possessed by persons of mediocre achievement. He divided his strength. He used up his energies, not in the pursuit of great ideals only, fidgeted and frayed by idle, vain and selfish people and by crude and trifling efforts made in association with them. He had moments of defeat and abasement, but, when account is taken of all, he did experience the joy of life, which, as Shaw says, is, "being a force, being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap."

'Something should be added concerning Stead's extraordinary tenacity of purpose in union with an uncommon willingness to turn right about when he found on inquiry that the facts were against him. "Get to know your facts," was one of his workaday mottoes. It was in a search for facts, a search that he was persuaded must be successful, that he was led into his spiritualistic morass. Of the sincerity of his telepathic beliefs no one who knew the man can doubt for an instant. One day I wired to him that I should come in the evening to see him in Wimbledon. "My dear Robertson Scott," he said on my arrival, "why did you take the trouble to wire? You know that you could have made me aware of your coming."

'Stead's name is remembered with gratitude by many women. It might well be cherished by many more. Only the other day I met a woman of education and public spirit belonging to what is usually supposed to be a well-informed section of society who had met Stead on one occasion late in his life and had valued him. Yet I found that never to this day had she heard of the "Maiden Tribute." To make Stead into anything like a plaster saint for the woman's movement would be, of course, absurd. Congregationalist he was to the last, but no man was less "tied up wi' godly laces." He was not sicklied o'er with religion. He was religious and a free man. A Galahad, no man of his time can have been exposed to more "temptation." Stead, like so many big natures, had a saving vein of Rabelaisianism. So had his disciple my dear colleague, Garrett, one of the "purest" of men, and a fighter from his youth up in the women's cause.

'Clever women, with sparks of ability, but mostly stranded, undisciplined and unfit, women to whom no other editor than Stead would have given a hearing, were often to be met with ascending or descending his stairs, or lying in wait for his kind word, his recommendation or his charity. I remember, too, one of Stead's public meetings. There was a good woman on the platform beside him who, as she came forward to speak, attracted the attention of the reporters, for her bonnet slid to a sharper angle, a button slipped its moorings, a piece of stuff in the penetralia of her skirts zipped as her knee tore it away, and a hairpin tinkled on the floor. A rather superior representative of the *Times* attending his first "purity" meeting fixed his monocle, gazed and muttered, "Gad, I could trust that woman anywhere!"

'When a final judgment on Stead's career comes to be set down it may well be considered what our journalism might have been without him. The roots of some of the finer things which came to a crop under the hand of Northcliffe are to be found, as he agreed with me more than once, in the work and visions of Stead. The same may be said of the *Daily Chronicle* in its great days under Massingham. It had been a worthy exercise if some who walked with advantage in daily and periodical journalism in Stead's footsteps owned their indebtedness to Northumberland Street and Mowbray House when Stead's circle began to narrow and his light to fail. Not only at home but all over the world the "Gospel" according to the *Pall Mall Gazette* as Stead taught it, was preached. Some will have in mind the spirited and successful American *Review of Reviews*. Nor will an instructed reader of Cook's Life of Edmund Garrett, in which one of Stead's men writes of a colleague, fail to see how much of the *P.M.G.* there was, in a time of Imperial crisis, in the *Cape Times*, how much of a Stead was its Editor-Assemblyman in that public work which is part of the history of South Africa and is proudly acknowledged in Cape Town Cathedral. Nothing touched me more during my publication of a War time review in Tokyo (*The New East*) than a message from Havelock Ellis in which he said: "It is clear that you have been largely inspired by Stead, and in this, I think, you have been wise."

'And that emboldens me to tell a story of Stead which is more personal. Owing to the fact that I had been bred among the farmers of Cumberland fells, had learnt some political wisdom out of "Rob Roy," and had had for a friend since my teens the doyen of the press of the Netherlands, I early gained some understanding of the Boers. Years before there were any "pro-Boers," and years before the Raid, I used to try to get Stead to take a juster view of the uncouth, difficult and sometimes not too scrupulous Transvaalers, but I made no headway. When the Boer war came and Britain threw away 200 millions, many thousands of lives and some of her good name in South Africa, and Stead was the first among the "pro-Boers," he owned to me, with a kindness and bigness all his own, how far he had been wrong for years past in his South African standpoint.

'In what he himself called his "unregenerate South African days," he had been good enough to press me, and to get Mr. Beit and two others to press me, to take the editorship of the *Johannesburg Star*, afterwards accepted by the brilliant Monypenny. But I was distressed by Stead's prancing South African attitude, I did not see the Rand financial gentlemen in the patriotic limelight in which they were customarily exhibited, and there did not seem to be much chance of my achieving anything worth while in a personal struggle with them. Finally Stead rang me up. He conjured me to go to South Africa by the gravity of the political situation, by his authority as my journalistic parent, and by the fact that, with three *P.M.G.*

men out there – Milner in the High Commissionership, Garrett at the *Cape Times* and me the *Star* editor – and himself in the then influential chair of the *Review of Reviews* – things could be shaped in South Africa "on sound *P.M.G.* lines." But I decided not to go. Perhaps I was wrong. I know I grieved my old chief, and I have compunctions still. One morning long after, when a succession of Boer War disasters had come upon us and Stead was manfully – it may be a little quixotically – running his paper, *War Against War in South Africa*, he rang me up again. "Robertson Scott," he said, "I want to tell you something that you won't forget and it will be a lesson to you. Had you gone out to Johannesburg there would have been no War. You are responsible for the War."

'It was a characteristic piece of extravagance but I wish I could hear his voice again even in reproach.

'Stead was happy in the time of his death for his work was done. Even the place of his passing, half-way between England and America, was enviable for one of the most loyal citizens of the English-speaking world.

'When the life and work of Stead are judged by a generation which has benefited by wider opportunities than he had, but a generation to which he has been but a faded name, let it be remembered that no man may be censured for not having been in all his ways in advance of the times in which he struggled.'

Two other *P.M.G.* workers in very close touch with Stead were Miss Hulda Friederichs and Mr. Wilfrid Hargrave.

Stead regarded it as a feather in his cap that he was the first London Editor to engage a woman on exactly the same terms, with regard to work and pay, as a man. Miss Friederichs was the woman in question – a very young woman in 1882, when she joined the paper. In these last years of the 'Eighties she was one of the best-known members on its staff. In response to my request for a description of the office and its activities from a woman's standpoint Miss Friederichs has very kindly furnished me with some notes, from which I take the following:

'The way to the old *Pall Mall* offices in Northumberland Street lay, for the members of the staff who lived on the south side of the river, through a dark cavern approached from Villiers Street, as you came down the steps from Hungerford Bridge. Thousands of times Mr. Stead might have been seen between the years 1882 and 1889 crossing the cavern with slouching step and bent shoulders, a large leather hand-bag swinging from one hand, a bag bulging with newspapers and bursting with old age. The building on the left of the cavern, at the Northumberland Street end, was then a public-house. Next to it were some grim brick houses where furnished apartments were let. Then came the *P.M.G.* In the afternoon when edition after edition was sent up from the basement through the open trap-doors on the pavement, there was no mistake about the three houses merged into one being a newspaper office. By a few worn-out steps you reached a darksome little lobby, with greasy doorposts, and a narrow, winding, wooden staircase leading to the editorial offices on the first floor. In the porter's box at the bottom of the stairs a printed notice warned inquirers that the Editor was "invisible" before noon, that callers were many and time precious, for which reason the former were asked not to waste the latter. At the top of the stairs there were a number of hutches, all but one to the front, and boasting of at least a window (cob-web-veiled and coated with samples of the London atmosphere in mummified form); the room at the back had only a sort of skylight. The rooms were furnished with the barest and crudest and ugliest and dustiest of "adapted" writing-tables, and a rickety chair or two.

'I can remember nothing else, except in W.T.S.'s hutch a rough reading-stand for the daily papers nailed to the wall, and a tiny lift for sending copy to the composing room under the roof. There were also some hot water pipes on which, at the stuffiest hours of the day (between twelve and one, when three people had been in one hutch for three hours) a glass of stout used to be warmed in a horrid little hot water tank on the top of the pipes. It formed part of the poor tired Chief's luncheon, which came in a parcel of sandwiches out of the leather bag he carried so jauntily across from Waterloo Station.'

Miss Friederichs, though grateful to Stead for many kindnesses and far from blind to his gifts and virtues, is not, like Mr. Hargrave, one of his out-and-out admirers. Mr. Hargrave prefaces his reminiscences[1] with the remark that just as no man is a hero to his valet, great men are seldom heroes to their secretaries. 'But there are exceptions to the rule,' he says. 'In my early days of London journalism I was secretary to Mr. Stead for something under two years, and he has remained since then, and he was long before, a hero in my eyes.'

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[1] Contributed to the *Westminster Gazette*, April 18, 1912, after the news of Stead's death in the *Titanic* disaster.

As a young newspaper-man with a fair share of provincial experience, Mr. Hargrave had watched the meteoric brilliance of the *P.M.G.* admiringly from afar. One morning in 1888 he decided to try his luck with it. He made his way in, anxiously and nervously, to be received with a considerate kindness which, he declares, still amazes him. He recalls most gratefully the valuable little lecture upon journalism which Stead proceeded to give him, and which was to bear fruit almost at once, for his first contribution found its way into the *Pall Mall* that very week, and some months later he was installed in the office. Mr. Hargrave concludes his reminiscences thus:

'It is an amusing nightmare to recall the old days at the *Pall Mall* in one respect: for the Editor's accessibility made the little office at that time the Mecca of the Crank. Personally and by letter he was bombarded by the oddest set of creatures outside Bedlam, and to some of the letters the most elaborate replies had to be sent. Once in a thousand times or so the Crank turned out to be a Genius – and so one supposes the account was squared. Added to these more or less crazy appeals, of course, there was a huge correspondence with the "Great Wise and Eminent" men of the day, and, for his secretary, an illuminating insight into the methods of work of a born philanthropist, a close observer, an original thinker, and one of the keenest journalists the world has ever known.'

Of the members of the *Pall Mall* staff who had been with Stead since the beginning of his Editorship only two of any importance now remained – E. T. Cook, second in command since 1885, and Mr. William Hill, a very zealous and energetic colleague from first to last. Milner, who resigned in the summer of 1885, had hastened back to Stead's support in the following October, when the Old Bailey trial was impending, but his connection with the paper ceased soon afterwards. Mr. Henry Norman[1] worked actively, side by side with Cook, during 1886 and the early part of 1887, and then vanished into space as a 'Roving Commissioner,' writing some brilliant letters from America, Canada and Japan, but not returning to London until 1900. Mr. (afterwards Sir) Robert Donald, whose close friendship with Stead began in the 'Maiden Tribute' days, was in Paris during these later 'Eighties, and wrote occasionally for the *Pall Mall* on French topics.

E. T. Cook, calm, level-headed, good-humoured, diplomatic, took

[1] Afterwards the Right Hon. Sir Henry Norman, P.C.

less pleasure in the *Pall Mall* itself, perhaps, than in its by-products – especially those familiar and immensely popular 'Extras' (for which he was chiefly responsible), *Mems about Members*, and the *Illustrated Guide to the Royal Academy*. He was at no time of his life an enthusiast, and Stead's enthusiasm did not infect him. When 'scoops' were in question, he was apt to be something of a wet blanket! His great gifts as a political journalist were not to be fully revealed until he himself became editor of the paper and was able to conduct it in his own way. His biographer, Mr. Saxon Mills, says of him:

> 'I have wondered whether Cook's equability was more physical or philosophic. He had, no doubt, a touch of that "stoical pococurantism" which Carlyle tells us is characteristic of English youths of high birth or high education. At long last, perhaps, nothing really mattered. Such a creed may have its dangers. But it may also act as a sedative, while those who hold it are often apt to insist, with a sort of noble inconsequence, that certain things such as conscience and principle shall matter exceedingly so far as their own influence and example go. I detected something of this spirit in Cook. "The best preservation," he once wrote, "against the worry and responsibility of journalism is not to take the work too seriously." And he then quoted, as he was rather fond of doing, the reply which Mr. John Morley in his editorial days dictated to his secretary for transmission to a contributor who was excited about the non-appearance of some article he had sent in: "Write and tell him," said Mr. Morley, "that the world moves, even though his article does not appear, and that it would continue to move if the paper itself never appeared again." '[1]

And on another page Mr. Saxon Mills cites Cook's contemporary description of *P.M.G.* methods: 'Unless we are read to-day, we shall never be read. Hence our straining after effect, our exaggerated emphasis, our headlines and our Booms. Let us strive and scream, for to-morrow we die.' He took part in it all, smilingly, industriously, efficiently, but often with distaste. One immense compensation his *Pall Mall* apprenticeship had for him, however – it was not his *métier*, but it introduced him to his *métier*: it brought him into touch with Ruskin, whose 'Complete Works' he was afterwards to edit, and whose biography he was to write. That great biography of Ruskin will be read long after Cook's journalistic achievements have been forgotten.

[1] See E. T. Cook's own version on p. 94.

II

MR. BERNARD SHAW'S ESTIMATE

Du choc des opinions, the French say, *jaillit la vérité.* There has been clash enough between the opinions of Stead already cited – Auberon Herbert's and Lord Morley's, Lord Milner's and Harold Frederic's, Mrs. Fawcett's and Mrs. Emily Crawford's, and that of Mr. Bernard Shaw in 1887. We shall read now the opinion of Mr. Shaw in 1922. He has expressed it in compliance with my request. It may be taken, obviously, as in some degree a correction of the earlier opinion. In 1887, as we have seen, Mr. Shaw had not wholly abandoned trust in the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette.*

Should we not relish all of these 'Shavian' asperities, we must bethink us of the words of Mr. Havelock Ellis, cited on page 297. Indeed, in order to know Stead thoroughly, we must face not only those of his 'weaknesses, defects, and failures,' which we ourselves admit, but also those which are imputed to him by others who knew him well, but which we, for our part, question or discount or deny.

'Stead (writes Mr. Bernard Shaw) was impossible as a colleague: he had to work single-handed because he was incapable of keeping faith when excited; and as his hyperæsthesia was chronic he generally *was* excited. Nobody ever trusted him after the discovery that the case of Eliza Armstrong in the Maiden Tribute was a put-up job, and that he himself had put it up. We all felt that if ever a man deserved six months' imprisonment Stead deserved it for such a betrayal of our confidence in him.[1] And it was always like that, though the other cases were not police cases. He meant well: all his indignations did him credit; but he was so stupendously ignorant that he never played the game. The truth is that he seldom knew that there was any game to play, and was delivered up to a complete infatuation with his own emotions which prevented him from noticing or remembering or even conceiving that other people were otherwise preoccupied. He had, as far as I could see, no general knowledge of art or history, philosophy or science, with which to co-ordinate his journalistic discoveries; and it was consequently impossible for cultured minds to get into any sort of effective contact with his except on the crudest common ground. This is the explanation of his ineffectiveness for anything wider and deeper than a journalistic stunt. He was so extraordinarily incapable of learning anything even from daily experience, that when he attempted to edit a new daily paper years after his retirement from the old *Pall Mall*, his secretary wrote to me as one of his old reviewing staff, and informed me that she proposed to send me a batch of books for review on the old terms (two guineas a thousand) precisely as if I were still a young journalist in my thirties. And he himself resumed his articles on Home Rule just where they had left off in the 'eighties.

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[1] To this matter I need not, I think, return. The whole story has been told in Chapter 8: Mr. Shaw would have told it differently. To Mrs. Fawcett, as well as to some quite unprejudiced readers, old enough to recall the episode, the version which I have given of it seems correct; but it could still, of course, be made the subject of an endless controversy.—F. W.

'The daily paper fiasco disposed of Stead's imaginary reputation as an editor. Nobody had been much surprised at the fact that, though in his *Pall Mall* days he had had Oscar Wilde and myself actually under his hand on his reviewing staff, with William Archer and others, yet, being unable to distinguish us from the office boy, he let us drift away to the real editors, Yates, Russell, Scott, Massingham, Frank Harris, and Garvin. But when it turned out that he could not even see the sun crossing the heavens and the moon waxing and waning, or buy a calendar later than 1885, the younger men in Fleet Street began to wonder, not merely who Stead was, but whether he had ever been a journalist. When you told them that his leading articles had once been read by statesmen as factors in political life with which they were bound to be acquainted, and that some of his stunts had been as successful as those of Swift and Voltaire, they simply did not believe you.

'We never quarrelled; but he was of no use to me; I was smuggled on to the old *Pall Mall* by Archer, with Armstrong (not Eliza) and Henry (now Sir Henry) Norman, as his accomplices. Stead once induced me to support him at a public meeting at Queen's Hall; and I attended accordingly, only to find that he did not know what a public meeting was (he thought it was just like a prayer meeting), or what public procedure was, or what a chairman was. Treating the assembly as his congregation and nothing else, he rose and said, "Let us utter one great Damn!" Then he burst into hysterical prayer; and I left. He had no suspicion that to invite Catholics, Jews, Agnostics, Hindoos, and so forth to support him at a public meeting, and then treat them to a revivalist orgie, was in any way indelicate or improper.

'Though utterly impossible, Stead was not unamiable. One night he was crossing Westminster Bridge with John Burns, who had listened in grim silence to a long history of Julia. Burns stopped suddenly, and said with terrible impressiveness: "Stead, if I were a a true friend to you I should chuck you over that parapet into the river." That was the nearest anyone ever got to disliking him. Grant Richards, and all the young people who slaved for him secretarially, seemed devoted to him. The older people, who could do nothing with him, gave him up without bitterness. Within human limits there was no malice in him: he would let you down as he let Mrs. Emily Crawford down;[1] but he did not stab nor sneer; he was not envious or jealous; and he was quite modest in himself if not in his missions; a conceited man would have been ashamed to have such a registered telegraphic address as "Vatican, London." When he had committed some specially exasperating indiscretion or disloyalty to an unwritten understanding (mostly, I repeat, through ignorance of the unwritten law), the sufferers might swear at him for a week or two; but it was impossible to keep it up against him.

'In a State like ours, where men can acquire social training and liberal culture only at the cost of acquiring class prejudices and incurring anti-social obligations, and losing moral courage and republican honesty in the process, it is hard to say that Stead's deficiencies did not often serve as assets: but they certainly limited and frustrated him sufficiently to prevent him from realizing anything like his potential social value.'

Such is Mr. Shaw's impression of Stead – very definite and very individual, like all Mr. Shaw's impressions, and expressed, of course, with his wonted whimsicality. What are we to think about it?

How far is it true, in the first place, that Stead was 'utterly impossible as a colleague,' that he 'never played the game,' that 'the older people, who could do nothing with him, gave him up'? This view of Stead is not peculiar to Mr. Shaw. Mrs. Emily Crawford, for instance, still held it in 1904, when, *à propos* of the *Daily Paper*, she expressed herself to me in very similar terms. There is probably a good deal of truth in these complaints. Lord Morley said once, in 1887, he thought Stead had gone best in double harness, but that was because, having been himself the more powerful horse, he had been able to control his not easy yoke-fellow. Lord Milner, in *Pall Mall Gazette* days, found Stead delightful to work with, but Stead was then in supreme command. So it was with Garrett and Robertson Scott, and the staff of the *Review of Reviews*. It was otherwise, however, with many of Stead's co-workers in political and social movements. With a few, notably with Dr. Clifford, he co-operated in perfect harmony from first to last; but with some he was apt to be at loggerheads. I think that if we were to go thoroughly into the question, we should find that on this point Mr. Bernard Shaw is substantially right – although he exaggerates in order to shock us!

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[1] See Chapter 12, p. 259.

As to Stead's ignorance, again, Mr. Shaw is probably quite right in a sense – in very much the same sense in which Mr. H. G. Wells was right in calling Mr. Gladstone an ignoramus.[1] The Grand Old Man was continually astonishing his friends by an almost child-like unfamiliarity with science: according to Professor James Stuart the motions of the moon were altogether beyond him. Stead, in his haphazard self-education, was able to include very little either of science or of art or of philosophy. Of history I think he knew much more than Mr. Shaw realizes. But all this, really, is rather idle talk. 'Ignorant' is such a very relative term. Lord Acton applied it once to men infinitely more learned than Stead ever set up to be; the passage is worth noting by Mr. Shaw, and is curiously apt here: 'It is, after all, the ignorant like Pascal, like Descartes, like Rousseau – who had read little but who thought and dared – these are the men who make the world go.'

In regard to Mr. Shaw's next assertion – that 'the daily paper fiasco disposed of Stead's imaginary reputation as an editor' – we shall not take long to convince ourselves that here he is wildly, astonishingly wrong. That fiasco, as we shall see, was but an almost irrelevant incident; already it is all but forgotten. Which of us ever gives it a thought? In spite of it, and in spite of other mishaps and misadventures, Stead remained until his death the most famous of English editors. As an 'editor' in the narrowest sense of the word he was easy to find fault with, though he was not, of course, so inadequate as Mr. Shaw contends; if he was not always responsive to the highest literary genius, he certainly encouraged countless writers of real talent and originality;[2] but if we take the word in its wider acceptation as signifying the man responsible for the whole tone and scope of the publication he edits, Stead's standing is unassailable. There is no need to say much in proof of this. The testimony of three of his most brilliant contemporaries will suffice – their tributes are not merely to Stead the free-lance controversialist, but to the editor of the *Review of Reviews* and the founder of 'The New Journalism.'

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[1] In *The Outline of History*.

[2] Among them the famous Miss Flora Shaw (afterwards Lady Lugard) who was a very active member of Stead's *P.M.G.* staff. Among Stead's papers is an autograph letter from George Meredith introducing to him Miss Shaw as 'one of those whom it is a privilege to know, to serve, and be served by.'

'From the Bulgarian Atrocities to the Boer War,' wrote Mr. H. W. Massingham in 1912,[1] 'there has been no pen which in England wielded an ascendancy comparable with Stead's.'

'It was in sheer vitality and vitalizing power that he excelled,' wrote Mr. J. L. Garvin, on the same occasion. 'As a living and energizing personal force, giving vivid being to the paper stuff that may so easily become waste dead matter, and into which no man can put more than he can take out of himself, I doubt whether he ever had an equal in journalism. More than anyone else he realized that though it works with words, it is a matter of action, not merely a chorus to contemporary life expressing the comments of passive witnesses. Stead was splendidly the journalist as a man of action holding his own with men of action from the top down in all other spheres. He was the only journalist who has been an international figure in his own right, apart from any particular newspaper. He was not only a man of genius; he was possessed by ideas as only a man of strong genius can be. That was his hindrance in many ways, but it was that that made him.'

These things could be written of Stead, not at his zenith merely, but even up to the time of his death, and not in England only, but in all parts of the world. The news of the *Titanic* disaster, we are told by Dr. E. J. Dillon (who was apt to be as critical of Stead sometimes as even Mr. Shaw himself), evoked a heartfelt response from one end of Russia to the other. 'Members of all parties, of all classes, of all creeds and nationalities, commemorated Stead with gratitude and pride. "The prince of European journalists" one publicist calls him; "the soul of social reform" is the term applied to him by another, and "the genuine friend of Russia" by all. In the remotest towns his name is familiar. In parts of Finland it is a household word. It will live in the world's history.'

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[1] *The Nation*, April 1912.

CHAPTER 15

THE *REVIEW OF REVIEWS* AND ITS PROGRAMME, 1890–93

I

A PORTRAIT OF STEAD IN THE EARLY 'NINETIES

It may be interesting, now that we have come to this new phase of Stead's career, to see the impression made by his past record upon the mind of his early counsellor, Wemyss Reid. To adapt a pleasant phrase once used by Lord Houghton, 'that old friendship' was 'still rankling' between the two journalists from the north. They had continued to be keenly interested in each other, exchanging always a certain reluctant admiration, each recognizing in the other's equipment sundry qualities which he himself lacked; but, while agreeing about many things and generally fighting on the same side, they were incompatibles both socially and politically, and each was apt to get on the other's nerves. There is no need to labour the comparison between them, because it becomes manifest in the entertaining passages which I am about to quote: they are from a character-sketch in the *Speaker*, the Liberal weekly review which Reid founded in 1891 and which was eventually transformed into the *Nation*.[1] Stead paid scant heed as a rule to what was said of him in print, except in the case of violent attacks – these he often relished; but this article angered him a little as coming from a friend. And yet it is written in a not unamicable spirit. It 'was meant to be entirely friendly,' Reid protested afterwards in a letter, 'as indeed my feelings towards you required it to be. I have often heard you attacked bitterly and unfairly, and I was determined to the best of my ability to meet those attacks.' The truth of the matter is that Reid's whole nature precluded him from seeing Stead with the eyes of more whole-hearted admirers – I do not mean the quite uncritical, extravagant admirers of whom he always had so many, but such generous souls as Mrs. Fawcett and Mrs. Besant and Lord Milner and Lord Esher and Cardinal Manning and others who, like Reid himself, were often in complete disagreement with his views. Reid, a somewhat conventional club-man and 'man-of-the-world,' is in this estimate honestly trying to do justice to a brilliant colleague whose temperament and methods are altogether opposed to his own:[1]

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[1] *The Speaker*, January 28, 1893. 'The Modern Press,' IV.

'Mr. Stead (he writes) is a gentleman regarding whom most men find it impossible to entertain a neutral or even a judicial mind. There are those amongst us who, if they do not worship him, at least regard him with feelings of unqualified and enthusiastic admiration; and there are others to whom he is as the personification of evil itself. The one class believes him to be hero, apostle, prophet, and martyr, the man to whom the world may be indebted for its deliverance from the intolerable load of sin and misery it has to bear upon its weary shoulders. To the other class he is an imposter, a charlatan, a hypocrite, and an adventurer. The truth, of course, is not to be found with either party, but it is needless to say that the man who can inspire such feelings, so strong and so directly contradictory, must be the possessor of a marked and remarkable individuality. To begin with, Mr. Stead is unquestionably a very brilliant journalist, a man of strong convictions, of real devotion to what he believes to be his duty, and of absolute sincerity. His characteristic faults are those of his temperament, and of his imperfectly developed intellect, which, keen and strong though it may be, is, in some respects, curiously narrow and stunted. To do a great work in the world, and a work wholly for good; to leave his fellow-creatures distinctly the better for his life and labours, and, whilst he lives, never, if he can help it, to leave a wrong unredressed – these are the great objects of Mr. Stead's ambition. Their nobility no one can doubt, nor will anyone who knows him fail to respect his character and personal earnestness.'

After glancing rapidly back at Stead's achievements on the *Northern Echo* and as Morley's assistant on the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and emphasizing the 'two really serious defects of his nature: a certain flightiness of mind and an overweening self-confidence,' Reid continues:

'Always aggressive, Mr. Stead, on the retirement of Mr. Morley from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, speedily made his mark by the dogmatic emphasis and certainty with which he propounded views that were new and bewildering to the majority of his readers. They concerned not merely politics but morals, and they were preached with an earnestness that ought to have left no doubt in the minds of anybody as to the preacher's sincerity. But the effect was marred, not only by the almost insolently aggressive manner in which these doctrines were taught, but by the freedom with which their author resorted to the methods of the sensational journalist. He had a mission to discharge, the dignity and gravity of which he evidently felt; but he had, at the same time, to run a newspaper, and his first purpose was to catch the public ear. So dignity and gravity were laid aside, and every trick of artifice that could attract the attention of the world was freely employed. For a time his success was remarkable. Even those who did not agree with what he said were impressed by the air of conviction with which he said it. He thundered forth his new commandments as though he stood on the top of Sinai or on the steps of St. Peter's; and, naturally, the world, which is always apt to take a man at his own valuation, was moved and impressed by his resounding voice. Great statesmen, though they might hate Mr. Stead personally, accepted his newspaper as though it were the organ of Fate itself; and, for a time, his importance in the world of politics was almost unique. It is told of him, about this period in his career, that happening one day to be conversing with Mr. Gladstone on a question which at the moment perplexed the Ministry, he modestly remarked, "Look here, Mr. Gladstone! If you and I were to put our heads together we could settle this business in half an hour, without troubling any of those fellows" – meaning thereby, Mr. Gladstone's colleagues in the Cabinet.'

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[1] In the volume of his Memoirs published after his death we find Sir Wemyss Reid recording the fact that when he became editor of the *Leeds Mercury* he registered a kind of mental vow 'not to make any enemies' – he had made none, he thought, so far. This little bit of self-revelation serves to indicate the immense difference between him and Stead.

In parenthesis, I may say that Stead denied the truth of this story, whereas Reid declared that he had had it, some years before, from Stead's own lips and that Stead must have forgotten it. One feels that, whatever its source, it is too good not to be true! Stead had much more ground for complaint in some of the remarks which follow. It is, for instance, a monstrous calumny that Stead 'never forgave.' He was *most* forgiving. No one could forgive the repentant more fully or magnanimously. If certain pompous public men 'snubbed' him he hit back at once and repeatedly – and small blame to him! – but he was always ready and eager to accept amends. In respect to the 'Maiden Tribute' agitation, also, we may dismiss Reid's criticisms – the English world, as we have seen, had badly needed the kind of shock which Stead gave it.

'In the main Mr. Stead's influence on public affairs was wholesome. He made great mistakes, for in the case of a man of his temperament mistakes were inevitable; but he was always inspired by good motives, and if at times personal feeling, and especially personal resentment, guided his pen, he was still, so far as poor humanity can be, true to his own convictions and ideals. But, like one of the objects of his political animosity, he never forgot and he never forgave, and many a public man has had occasion to regret the moment when he snubbed the too impulsive editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Of his many remarkable achievements whilst he filled that post we need only refer to two. The first was the agitation which led up to the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Nothing could have been more unfortunate, nothing more reckless or reprehensible, than the methods by which he started that agitation; but in itself the object at which he aimed was entirely good, and we have to thank him for a great improvement in the law of the land. Nor, in connection with this subject, ought we to forget that when, in his reckless pursuit of his mission, he himself incurred the penalties of the law, he took his punishment like a man, and uttered no word of whining complaint of the fate that had overtaken him. Indeed, he seemed to enjoy his martyrdom.'

After an appreciative allusion to the Langworthy case, Reid concludes:

'Of his blunders there is little need to speak. The world, as a rule, has a long memory for these things, and we may, therefore, save ourselves the trouble of refreshing it. What is certain is that by his fearless action on behalf of the victims of wrong-doing, whether those victims were individuals or classes, by a certain chivalry of character, and, perhaps chiefly, by his devotion to that Puritan faith which was so long the ruling factor in our national life, Mr. Stead succeeded in gathering round him a body of ardent sympathizers and admirers. His unconventionalism, his intentional neglect of the minor customs of polite society, have combined with his great abilities and boundless self-confidence to give him that strong individuality of character by which alone the imagination of the masses can be touched. If, in addition to ability, he possessed stability, if his remarkable strength of will were combined with a wide knowledge of the world, and of human life and character, and if he could at times remember that the publicity which in the eyes of the New Journalist is a panacea for every ill private and public may be an odious and a dangerous thing, he might become a very great man. But what in the way of greatness can be hoped for from one who in turn has derived his inspiration from such varying personages as Mme. Novikoff, General Booth, Cardinal Manning, and the unknown spook who, according to his own declaration, is now the wielder of his pen? Nevertheless, whatever may be the measure of his greatness, he is, unquestionably, one of the most interesting figures in contemporary society.'

With these final sentences neither Stead nor his most sensitive defender need quarrel. They summarize excellently his *status* at the period with which we have now to deal. Brave, brilliant, original, chivalrous, but at times distressingly unconventional and alarmingly unstable – so he seemed to most people. And most people overestimated the influence upon him of such associates as the three named. 'Julia,' the 'unknown spook,' however, was an unknown quantity of whose future influence Stead himself could at this moment form no adequate conception. Two decades later he was to say to a friend that if his name were remembered a hundred years hence, it would be as that of 'Julia's amanuensis!'[1]

II

THE FIRST NUMBER, JANUARY 1890

'The world is full of a number of things,' but I don't think it can have been full of quite such a number of things for anybody else who ever lived as it was for W. T. Stead from 1890 onwards! As Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* he had been addressing a certain definite and comparatively small audience. Now he had to take all mankind – all intelligent mankind – for his *clientèle* and to cater for every taste. No other periodical previously known can have touched upon such a multiplicity of topics as were to be dealt with, month by month, in the *Review of Reviews*. Its strenuous founder exulted at the start in this wide variety, but he soon realized its drawbacks. It involved too great a dissipation of his energy. Tolstoi, who had great personal sympathy with Stead, deplored the *Review of Reviews*, reviling it as an *omnium gatherum*; it lacked the single intellectual and moral trend which Tolstoi wanted in everything.[2] Stead himself, as we know,

[1] *Stead: the Man*, by Miss Edith Harper.

[2] I have this from my friend, Mr. Robert Crozier Long, who knew Tolstoi well. Mr. Long was Stead's secretary from 1897 to 1904.

was extraordinarily catholic in his range of interests, but the *Review of Reviews* was to prove in the long run too catholic even for him.

The first issue was produced in a whirl – Stead's natural element. The venture had not been definitely decided on until December 7, 1889, and Number 1 appeared on January 15, 1890. It had a really remarkable welcome. Autograph greetings from Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury were to be found on its opening page, followed by a wonderful array of cordial and encouraging letters from leaders of every shade of public opinion and from men and women of distinction of all sorts, among them Lord Randolph Churchill and Lord Hartington and Mr. Balfour, Lord Dufferin and Lord Coleridge, Huxley and Froude and Meredith, Cardinal Manning and the Archbishop of York, Canon Liddon and Professor Fairbairn and Professor Henry Drummond, General Booth, Mrs. Annie Besant, Michael Davitt, Labouchere, etc. Others were to follow in the second and third issues – messages from the Queen and the Prince of Wales and the Empress Frederick, congratulations from ambassadors and poets and foreign statesmen.

Labouchere emphasized what was to be one of the most valuable features of the publication. 'Nothing can be more desirable,' he wrote, 'than that Englishmen should be made acquainted with foreign opinion, for there are two sides to most questions and they are a good deal too much inclined to fancy that their own side is the only one.' George Meredith also was chiefly interested in this aspect of it. 'A survey and abstract of foreign publications,' he said, 'including critical French articles on the stage and current literature, I should consider particularly serviceable.' And James Russell Lowell expressed himself to the same effect, maintaining that newspaper articles, especially abroad, were often 'quite as well thought out' as those in the monthly periodicals. Mr. John Burns's letter was among the most interesting by reason of the following piece of autobiography: 'To a poor man like myself the prices of magazines are prohibitive. . . . I have at times bought the *Nineteenth Century* for an important article and thereby strained my resources. Being unable to purchase the *Fortnightly* of the same month, I have looked at the first two pages at a bookstall at Charing Cross, the next few at Waterloo and finished the article at Victoria some days later, compelled, of course, to buy a paper to justify my staying the time at each.'

Most of my readers will remember so well Stead's aims and methods as editor of the *Review of Reviews* that it cannot be necessary for me to quote at any length from the pages in which he formulated his policy. A few sentences may, however, be worth recalling. Here is one: 'When Thor and his companions travelled to Jotunheim, they were told that no one was permitted to remain there who did not in some feat or other excel all other men.' The *Review of Reviews* was to be in its way a Jotunheim.

The first step towards remembering what was worth storing in the mind was to forget what was worthless. The work of winnowing away the chaff from all the printed matter of the month, and of revealing the grain, was to be the task of the editorial thresher. Stead's real ambitions, however, went far beyond these 'humble but useful' duties. The *Review of Reviews* was to be something much more important than *A Magazine Rifle*, as some wit soon called it.[1]

A net profit of £10,000 a year would not have reconciled Stead to the issuing of a monthly made up of a mere appropriation and condensation of other people's ideas, inventions, and experiences. In his address 'To all English-Speaking Folk' he makes clear at once the full extent of his aspirations. 'There exists at this moment,' he declares in this stirring manifesto – reminiscent of his 'Gospel of the *Pall Mall Gazette*' – 'no institution which even aspires to be to the English-speaking world what the Catholic Church in its prime was to the intelligence of Christendom.' To call attention to the need for such an institution, adjusted to the altered circumstances of the new era, to enlist the co-operation of all those who would work towards the creation of some such common centre for the inter-communication of ideas – these are the ultimate objects for which he was founding his Review.

And here is his peroration:

> 'To establish a periodical circulating throughout the English-speaking world, with its affiliates and associates in every town and its correspondents in every village, read as men used to read their Bibles, not to waste an idle hour, but to discover the will of God and their duty to men, whose staff and readers are bound together by a common faith and a readiness to do common service for a common end, that, indeed, is an object for which it is worth while to make some sacrifice. Such a publication, so supported, would be at once an education and an inspiration; and who can say, looking at the present condition of England and of America, that it is not needed?'

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[1] Another suggestion for a title was 'Fagin's Miscellany'!

Besides 'reviewing the Reviews,' Stead explained in his programme, he would in each issue narrate the progress of the world during the previous month, he would include a comprehensive record of all new books, he would find room for either a complete summary of some noteworthy work of fiction or for some 'strange true story of real life,' and he would give a character sketch of the man or woman most conspicuous at the moment, presenting 'the individual as he seems to himself in his best moments rather than as he seems to his enemies at his worst.'

Pictures of some of the individuals as they really seemed to themselves in their 'best moments' would, one imagines, have been amusingly different from Stead's conceptions of them, but on the whole he did not stray far from the formula thus laid down. There were to be over two hundred and fifty character-sketches in all, most of them very friendly; and if the 'warts' are 'painted in' conscientiously enough in a good many of the portraits, there are not more than three or four faces in the entire gallery quite unsparingly depicted.

Some people felt that the 'warts' were not sufficiently emphasized in the first portrait of all, that of Sir Henry Stanley, the great explorer, who had just returned from his expedition to relieve Emin Pasha and who was now at the zenith of his fame.[1] Emin himself *alias* Dr. Eduard Schnitzer, follows later; and Stead makes of him a foil to another 'Scientist Proconsul' who in time was to be famous also as an artist and a novelist – the Sir Harry Johnston of to-day. In both men Stead saw 'a finished type of the kind of product which the scientific culture of the modern world turns out.' 'But,' he continues, 'Her Majesty's representative at Mozambique, although to outward appearance the meekest and mildest of men, has more iron in his little finger than Emin has in his whole body. Johnston goes into politics as science. Schnitzer-Emin can never feel that politics are other than a disagreeable interruption to the much more important pursuits of beetle-catching and bird-collecting.' 'Little Johnston,' as Rhodes used to call him in his letters to Stead about this period, had been an unknown personality outside African circles until his portrait had appeared as frontispiece to the first issue of the

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[1] For one person who knows Stanley's fascinating and moving Autobiography, a score are familiar probably with the writings of his censors in books, newspapers, and magazines. A well-balanced estimate by Sir Sidney Low, reprinted in the Autobiography from the *Cornhill*, should be read by those interested in the subject.

Review of Reviews. As far as the great reading public was concerned, he was one of Stead's many discoveries.

'Not so much a Father Confessor as a Brother Confessor,' Sir Harry described Stead in a charming appreciation, written after the loss of the *Titanic*.[1] This side of Stead's character emerges in the first number of the *Review of Reviews*, on page 78. We have been given our first 'condensed novel,' the novel being *Ellen Middleton*, a long-forgotten work by Lady Georgiana Fullerton, and the condensation from the pen of no less a personage than Mr. Gladstone – a contemporary *critique* first printed anonymously forty years before.[2] The story itself and Mr. Gladstone's ideas about it need not detain us, but their effect upon Stead is very interesting. They impelled him to add this postscript:

'A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION

'So far Lady Georgiana and Mr. Gladstone. The moral of the tale, however, seems to be quite different from that which they deduce from it. What Ellen Middleton needed was not a priest in a confessional, but a sympathetic, level-headed friend to whom she could have told her trouble. It was not absolution that she needed. It was advice and sympathy. No doubt there are many Ellen Middletons in the world of both sexes, who, if they could but disburden themselves of the horrid secret which poisons their existence, might once more breathe freely and live blithely on God's earth. But either because they have no confessor, or no friend whom they dare trust, they bury it in their hearts until, like the hapless Ellen, it destroys the life of their soul.

'Now is this so? It is a very simple question, and one to which a conclusive reply can soon be forthcoming. Are there any among the readers of this Review, who feel the craving for counsel, for sympathy, and for the consolation of pouring out their soul's grief? If so, may I ask them to communicate with me? If there be, as is possible enough, numbers who reject priestly guidance, but who, nevertheless, long for friendly counsel, that is a human necessity which ought to be met. The names of my correspondents will, if they so desire it, remain only known to me. But their cases, as they submit them, will be placed before such competent and skilful advisers as I am able to gather round me from amongst the best men and women in the

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[1] See the *Review of Reviews* for January–June 1912.

[2] It had been 'resurrected' by the editor of *Merry England*, Mr. Wilfrid Meynell.

English-speaking world. In this suggestion, which I put forward tentatively, there may be the germ of much useful service for many of the troubled and tried. I invite communications, and will respect confidences.'

This suggestion, Stead tells us in the next month's issue (p. 108), was more warmly discussed than any other feature in the first number and he renews the invitation with the following supplementary remarks :

'The publication of "the Practical Suggestion" was not, as some have been pleased to assume, any attempt to set up a Confessional. In Confession, the penitent confesses sins for the purpose of absolution. That is altogether distinct from the scope of the suggestion made above. The Catholic Church discriminates between those who make statements to the priest for the purpose of obtaining direction, and those who ease their souls by confession for the purpose of being absolved. It was only the former class to whom I appealed, and the result has justified the experiment. There has been no eager multitude rushing to disburden their souls of secrets, horrid or otherwise, and, what is perhaps more wonderful, there has not been a single hoax attempted. Anyone who has been editing a newspaper for twenty years is familiar with all manner of bogus communications. "A Practical Suggestion" elicited none. What happened was just what might have been expected. A small but steady stream of communications reached me, almost entirely from men, asking advice as to what should be done in circumstances in which, to say the least, they really stood in need of a sympathetic, level-headed adviser. With these communications I have dealt to the best of my ability, calling in, when needful, the counsel of those who had more experience and were more skilled than myself in the matters submitted to me. In some cases nothing could be done; in others, I am glad to know that substantial benefit has resulted, and the opportunity of helping one of the cases that came before me was cheaply bought at the price of all the raillery to which this suggestion has been subjected.

'I therefore repeat my suggestion, and add to it one small practical direction to correspondents. In writing to me it would always be better, in case they do not wish their identity to be known to anyone but myself, if they did not write their names and address on the letter stating their case, but send it to me on a separate slip of paper.'

Fortunately for Stead, the idea was just a little in advance of the time. 'What the epoch possesses, a hundred Talents promulgate,' Mr. William Archer, in an article on Stead's experiment in 'Soul-Doctoring,' cited a German poet as saying, 'but the Genius, clairvoyant, sees and supplies what it lacks.'[1] In the course of the next twenty years Stead was to practise Soul-Doctoring to a degree which no one can realize who has not been through his letter-books, but there was no inconvenient rush to his 'Consulting Rooms' in those early months of 1890. Had there been, it must have played sad havoc with his editing of the *Review of Reviews*!

III

MANAGERIAL ANXIETIES AND ALARMS

The *Review of Reviews* made a most successful start with its January number, and the issues for February and March also gave general satisfaction, but the partnership between Stead and Newnes was a quite impossible one. By April 1890, it had been dissolved. Stead from that month onward was installed at Mowbray House, Norfolk Street, Strand, in sole control of the periodical, having bought Newnes's half-share in it for £3,000. The nature and ideas of the two men were so completely at variance that they could not have collaborated for long, and it was just as well, probably, that the severance came so soon. A 'character sketch' of *The Times* which Stead was preparing, and which he printed in his June issue, brought things to a crisis. Newnes was alarmed about it; 'it was turning his hair grey,' Stead reports him as saying, 'to feel that he was becoming responsible for such articles.' It really was quite an innocuous composition, although not altogether pleasant reading, of course, for the controllers of *The Times*, who were not at that time used to such frank criticism as Stead administered to them; Mr. George Lewis, the solicitor, had laughed at the idea of any risk of a libel action: but Newnes's fears were not to be removed and the break came. Miss Friederichs, in her biography of Sir George Newnes, touches upon the subject lightly and brightly. Having described how the partners 'separated by mutual consent,' she says:

'And thinking of these matters, there comes back to my mind the recollection of the little speeches these two partners made as they took leave of one another. So typical they were of the two men; so frankly given, so cheerfully accepted. Both were repeated to me at first hand, and whether it was Sir George Newnes who imitated Mr. Stead's rapid and dramatic utterance, or whether it was Mr. Stead employing deep chest-notes in reproducing Sir George's deliberate manner of speaking, it was equally difficult, listening to these sermonettes, to suppress a smile or a chuckle. Mr. Stead, in his words of farewell, generously acknowledged his partner's great business ability, and said he felt sure he would have made more money by the *Review of Reviews* with a half share in the profits if he had remained with his first partner, than he would now make while owning the whole property. Mr. Newnes, on the other hand, preached a short homily on the subject of two kinds of journalism as observed by the man of affairs. "There is one kind of journalism," he said, "which directs the affairs of nations; it makes and unmakes Cabinets, it upsets Governments, builds up Navies and does many other great things. It is magnificent. This is your journalism. There is another kind of journalism which has no great ambitions. It is content to plod on, year after year, giving wholesome and harmless entertainment to crowds of hard-working people craving for a little fun and amusement. It is quite humble and unpretentious. That is my journalism." And so they parted, without regret, seeing the impossibility of working smoothly together, but without enmity, regarding one another with the amused tolerance of people who have agreed to differ.'

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[1] In the *Daily Graphic*, January 22, 1890 – 'A New Profession: Soul-Doctoring.'

According to Stead, one noteworthy sentence is here omitted from Newnes's little speech. Newnes had added – with good reason – that *his* kind of journalism brought in 'the shekels'!

From April 1890 to May 1891, when his former private secretary at the *P.M.G.* office, Mr. E. H. Stout, came to his assistance – to his rescue, in fact! – Stead conducted the *Review of Reviews* alone, and in doing so, showed himself very nearly as over-sanguine and improvident and in every way unbusinesslike as Captain Shandon of Thackeray's *Pall Mall Gazette*. In his own *P.M.G.* career, as we have seen, his financial carelessness had been held in check by others, and during the first three months of 1890 Mr. Newnes, of course, had managed the *Review*, but now Stead was unfettered. Soon things began to become very difficult for him, and before the year was out he was in really serious trouble. There is no need to give many details. Two or three very typical extracts from his correspondence will indicate sufficiently the state of affairs. The first is from a letter dated May 21, 1891, to Mr. Reginald Brett, at that moment in Paris:

'Notwithstanding my temporary tight place, I have a great property in my hand here, a property which brings in gross profits[1] of about £12,000 a year, which the most reckless extravagance and mismanagement cannot seriously impair. . . . In the meantime I have managed to scrape through by the skin of my teeth.'

He proceeds to thank Mr. Brett for the 'exceeding generosity and good-heartedness' of a proposal which has been made by that ever helpful friend, but of which, he says, he need not now avail himself, and proceeds:

'I need not say anything more at present. I hope that all will go straight now that Mr. Stout is here. At any rate I hope it will be possible for me to give you an intelligible statement as to how I actually stand through his help. I suppose the real fact is I needed to have got into this tight place in order to steel my heart hard enough to take the matter in hand seriously.'

On June 3, 1891, we find him writing to Dr. Albert Shaw, who had brought out the first number of the American Edition two months earlier:

'My position is simply this. – Owing to our failure to sell more than 120,000 Christmas Numbers, of which 200,000 were printed, I am at present about as hard up for money as any human being can be. . . . The Mattei business will bring in money; i.e., it will cover its expenses and produce profits available for public purposes when it is firmly rooted, but, like everything else, it requires rooting, and the immediate effect on my exchequer is to leave me £1,000 out of pocket. Which again hits me hard.'

A fortnight or so later Mr. Stout joined him at Mowbray House as Manager, and in the course of a couple of years he succeeded in putting the *Review* upon a more business-like basis, but Stead's troubles persisted for a while. His correspondence reflects his varying moods – now exultant over some new achievement or idea, now depressed by some unforeseen mishap.

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[1] Mr. Stout was much amused on reading this sentence thirty-one years later. It was the 'net profits,' he said, laughing, that he himself was concerned about.

An agitated letter to Mr. Stout, dated August 5, 1891, gives us the pessimist and optimist in one breath, so to speak. The first three pages are about money troubles – an overdrawn Bank account, two 'plaguy insurances,' a capitalist's 'impracticable condition.' If Mr. Stout wishes, Stead will return to town at once, in order to deal with the threatening crisis. Then the optimist comes to life again. He bethinks himself suddenly of the 'splendid reception' which he had 'last night' – 'the most attentive audience' he had ever addressed – he had held it 'spell-bound.' Nothing but mesmerism could explain it – so the Chairman had declared! 'Depend upon it,' Stead continues, 'this work we have in hand is God's job.' The 'Senior Partner' will not make it too hard for them, probably. 'He has never done so before and I fancy even now He is fixing up a pleasant surprise somewhere by way of reproving our unbelief.'

Things had not been altogether righted even eleven months later – indeed Stead was capable of upsetting the financial equilibrium of the *Review* at any moment, right to the very end!

On July 4, 1892, he writes to Mr. Stout, enclosing a statement showing how he himself 'figures out' the actual position of the *Review* at this date, and declaring that he is 'aghast' at the list of bills still outstanding.

> 'It seems (he continues) that we are almost as hopelessly in debt as ever. I don't understand it, and I want you and the accountant to make it clear to me in outline and not in detail.
>
> 'If there is no mistake, then we must begin the New Year (to-morrow is my birthday) with a revolutionary policy, *which however will not touch the expenditure necessary for carrying out the altruistic side of the Review.* That, you will see, I put down at £1,000 a year, of which one-half ought to be regarded as advertisement. This ought to cover the non-productive publications.'

Here, from a later letter of this kind to Mr. Stout, is another very characteristic touch – this unfortunate Vice-Consul was one of an endless list of such burdens upon Stead's ever open purse:

> 'Then there is that poor wretch who was a British Vice-Consul and has been reduced to sleeping on bridges at night. Pending the examination of his claims by the new Government I undertook to keep him going.'

Stead derived much encouragement naturally from the immediate success of the American edition of the *Review* and the auspicious start of the Australian edition under Dr. Fitchett,[1] a year and a half later. Two extracts from the letters in which he welcomed the first issues of these two subsidiary publications will be read with interest.

On April 15, 1891, Stead wrote to Dr. Shaw:

> 'I had a curious premonition all Sunday that something good was waiting for me at the office on Monday, but did not dream what it was. My thoughts ran in quite a different direction. I was so much impressed with the fact that something good was coming that, contrary to my usual custom in such things, I mentioned it to my wife, and behold, there was lying our handsome first-born American child!'

'Quite first-rate all round,' he pronounces it, and not merely 'very good for a first number,' for it would have been 'very good for a twentieth number – no one would think it was a first number to look at it. The only disadvantage that it has is that it makes the poor English parent look so shabby.' And he goes on to tell how Mr. Pearson[2] mourns over the impossibility of getting this 'beautiful calendered wood paper over here at a reasonable price.' Many other technical comments and reflections follow, together with particulars as to Stead's own next issue, the place of honour in which is to be given to 'A Prophet-Seer's Vision of a Social Millennium' – a review, that is, of *News from Nowhere*. 'Morris is a man of genius,' Stead continues, 'and his dreams are often wiser than other people's waking thoughts. Not that I think wisdom is the chief characteristic of his latest work, but it is suggestive and ought to be very attractive to those who welcomed *Looking Backward*.'

Dr. Fitchett's first number came in September 1892. Stead is delighted with it – except for 'the unsatisfactory tail and legs of the Kangaroo' upon its cover. He expresses his satisfaction, also, over 'the cordial letters from Notabilities' and the excellent press-notices which have greeted it. 'There is hardly a sufficient amount of abuse, however,' he adds, but that, he says, is a disadvantage he has to bemoan also in the case of his own *Review*. 'It does not get sufficiently denounced.' He welcomes one hostile criticism. 'I see the New Zealand paper complains that Fitchett and Stead between them are going to surfeit the world with their personality! So now I have got a fellow criminal!'

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[1] Author of the famous book, *Deeds that Won the Empire, How England Saved Europe*, published some years later.

[2] Afterwards Sir Arthur Pearson.

CHAPTER 16

STEAD AND SPIRITUALISM: THE 'LETTERS FROM JULIA'

'Many thousands have said: "It was all to me so much humbug until Stead went in for it." . . . All honour to Stead for the scorn, for the obloquy, for the sadness, and for the pain which his quest brought to him. . . . Things to me inexplicable came within the circle of his experience and though I, like Thomas, demand such things in my own experience for final conviction, far be it from me to assert or imagine that a kind Creator had not vouchsafed to him what He has denied to me.' – Mr. E. S. Hole, in *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, May 1912.

'I am addressing myself solely to those who are willing to admit that there is at least an "off chance" that all the religions and most of the philosophies – to say nothing of the universal instinct of the human race – may have had some foundation for the conviction that there is a life after death. Put the percentage of possibility as low as you like, if there be even the smallest chance of its truth, it is surely an obvious corollary from such an admission that there is no subject more worthy careful and scientific examination. Is it a fact or is it not? How can one arrive at a certainty on the subject? It may be that this is impossible. But we ought not to despair of arriving at some definite solution of the question one way or the other, until we have exhausted all the facilities for investigation at our disposal. Nothing can be less scientific than to ignore the subject and to go on living from day to day in complete uncertainty whether we are entities which dissolve like the morning mist when our bodies die, or whether we are destined to go on living after the change we call death.' – W. T. Stead in Preface to *After Death*, the revised and enlarged edition of *Letters from Julia*.

I

JULIA

THE reader will have noted that saying of Stead's about his being remembered a hundred years hence, if at all, as Julia's Amanuensis.

Who was Julia? Stead's fellow-spiritualists know her story by heart, but for most of his other friends and admirers the name has very vague associations. 'A spook of some kind who was by way of writing all sorts of queer things with Stead's hand' – that would be their answer to the question. There are, I am sure, many thousands among them who, for all their interest in Stead's character and achievements, have never made acquaintance with the volume, first issued in 1897, entitled *Letters from Julia, or Light from the Borderland, received by automatic writing from one who has gone before.* Yet it had to be reprinted seven times during the subsequent twelve years and it has been translated into French, German, Italian, Russian, and Hindustani, and there have been editions of it also in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Iceland.[1] In 1914 it came out in a new and enlarged form under the title *After Death*, with a long Preface which Stead had written in 1909, and an introductory note by his daughter. Stead had intended to use the Preface as soon as a second series of the Letters should be completed. 'This later series,' Miss Stead tells us, 'was never finished, and the fifteen letters which were written by Julia in the same manner as those already, i.e. through my father's hand, are of so much interest, in that they open up new lines of thought and show how in some matters Julia has changed her views as she has gained more knowledge of the life across the Border, that I have decided to include them in this volume – unfinished as they are – just as they were given to my father by Julia.'

It seems to me quite clear that readers who are anxious to form any kind of opinion worth having upon Julia and the part she played in Stead's development must read this volume through for themselves. Therefore I shall not attempt to treat of it in any detail. I shall note merely a few points of special interest – things which Stead recorded often enough elsewhere but which cannot be passed over without mention in his biography.

Here, to begin with, is Stead's own account in the Preface of the one supernatural gift to which he laid claim – the gift which enabled Julia to employ him as her 'amanuensis':

'I have what is called the gift of automatic handwriting. By that I mean that I can, after making my mind passive, place my pen on paper, and my hand will write messages from friends at a distance; whether they are in the body or whether they have experienced the change called death, makes no difference.

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[1] Miss Felicia Scatcherd, one of Stead's greatest friends and one of those in warmest sympathy with him in regard to spiritualism, tells me that *Letters from Julia* appeared also as a serial in the leading modern Greek review, founded by Dr. Drakoules.

'The advantage of obtaining such automatic messages from a friend who is still on this side of the grave is that it is possible to verify their accuracy by referring to the person from whom the message comes. I may say, in order to avoid misapprehension, that in my case the transmitter of the message is seldom conscious of having transmitted it and is sometimes surprised and annoyed to find that his unconscious mind has sent the message.'

Here Stead proceeds to give his favourite illustration of the way in which messages thus came to him from the living: the case of a friend of his, a lady who had been spending the week-end at Haslemere and who had promised to lunch with him on the following Wednesday if she returned to town. Late on the Monday afternoon he wished to know whether she was in fact returning and placing his pen on paper he 'mentally asked her' the question. Whereupon his hand wrote as follows:

'I am very sorry to tell you I have had a very painful experience of which I am ashamed to speak. I left Haslemere at 2.27 p.m. in a second-class carriage in which there were two ladies and one gentleman. When the train stopped at Godalming the ladies got out and I was left alone with the man. After the train started he left his seat and came close to me. I was alarmed and repelled him. He refused to go away and tried to kiss me. I was furious. We had a struggle. I seized his umbrella and struck him, but it broke and I was beginning to fear that he would master me when the train began to slow up before arriving at Guildford station. He got frightened, let go of me and before the train reached the platform he jumped out and ran away. I was very much upset. But I have the umbrella.'

Stead says that he then sent his secretary to her – presumably to her London home – with a note saying merely that he was very sorry to hear what had happened, and adding: 'Be sure and bring the man's umbrella on Wednesday.' She wrote in reply: 'I am very sorry you know anything about it. I had made up my mind to tell nobody. I will bring the broken umbrella, but it was my umbrella, not his.'

That, he declares, was the only mistake in the message which he had received. Since then, he proceeds to say, he had been in the habit of receiving automatic messages from many of his friends in the same way: 'In some the percentage of error is larger, but as a rule the messages are astonishingly correct.'

Now we come to messages from the dead and in the first instance to the messages from Julia.

One of the most notable among Stead's associates in the early 'Nineties was Lady Henry Somerset, so famous in the world of social reform. While visiting her in 1892 at Eastnor Castle in Somerset, he met a young American lady, Miss E. This Miss E had had a great friend, also an American, named Julia Ames, whom Stead himself had met in London in 1890. Miss E and Julia Ames had been like sisters and they had promised that whichever died first would return to show herself to the other in order to demonstrate the reality of the world beyond the grave. Shortly after this pledge had been given, Julia Ames died. 'Within a few weeks,' according to Stead, 'she aroused her friend from her sleep in Chicago, and showed herself by her bedside looking radiantly happy. After remaining silent for a few minutes she slowly dissolved into a light mist which remained in the room for half an hour.'

It was some months later that Miss E came back to England and was at Eastnor Castle. Here Julia reappeared for a second time to her one evening. Stead says that Miss E 'was wide awake and again she saw Julia as distinct and as real as in life.' No words were spoken.

Miss E told Stead the strange story and asked him, knowing his intense interest in all such things, whether he could get her a message from Julia.

'I offered to try (Stead tells us), and next morning, before breakfast, in my own room, my hand wrote a very sensible message, brief but to the point. I asked for evidence as to the identity of the transmitter. My hand wrote: "Tell her to remember what I said when last we came to Minerva." I protested that the message was absurd. My hand persisted and said that her friend would understand it. I felt so chagrined at the absurdity of the message that for a long time I refused to deliver it.'

When at last he did so Miss E exclaimed, 'Did she actually write that? Then it is Julia herself and no mistake.'

'How,' Stead asked, bewildered, 'could you come to Minerva?'

'Oh,' Miss E replied, 'of course, you don't know anything about that. Julia, shortly before her death, had bestowed the pet name of "Minerva" upon Miss Willard, the founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and had given her a brooch with a cameo of Minerva. She never afterwards called her anything but Minerva, and the message which she wrote with your hand was substantially the same that she gave to me on the last time when Minerva and I came to bid her good-bye on her death-bed.'

'Here again,' Stead points out, 'there was a slight mistake. Minerva had come to her (Julia) instead of Julia going to Minerva, but otherwise the message was correct.'

Having given several other such instances, Stead comes to his communications with his son, Willie, who had died in December 1908. He declares that he had long been convinced of the possibility of intercourse with the departed, but had always said: 'I will wait until some one in my own family has passed beyond the grave before I finally declare my conviction on this subject.'

'Twelve months ago this December (he continues) I saw my eldest son, whom I had trained in the fond hope that he would be my successor, die at the early age of thirty-three. The tie between us was of the closest. No one could deceive me by fabricated spurious messages from my beloved son.

'Twelve months have now passed, in almost every week of which I have been cheered and comforted by messages from my boy, who is nearer and dearer to me than ever before. The preceding twelve months I had been much abroad. I heard less frequently from him in that year than I have heard from him since he passed out of our sight. I have not taken his communications by my own hand. I knew him so well that what I wrote might have been the unconscious echoes of converse in the past. He has communicated with me through the hands of two slight acquaintances and they (the communications) have been, one and all, as clearly stamped with the impress of his own character and mode of thought as any of the letters he wrote to me during his sojourn on earth.

'After this, I can doubt no more. For me the problem is solved, the

"JULIA"

truth is established, and I am glad to have this opportunity of testifying publicly to all the world that, so far as I am concerned, doubt on this subject is henceforth impossible.'

The certainty that he was in spiritual communion with his son would naturally be the climax, so to speak, to Stead's apprenticeship to spiritualism; but, as a matter of fact, there does not seem to have been any uncertainty in his convictions at any previous period since the earliest of the Julia messages. On another page in his Preface we find him saying:

'The practice of communicating with my departed friends has been to me for fifteen years a source of constant inspiration, consolation and encouragement. I am still in intimate and friendly converse with Julia. Nor have I directly or indirectly found the practice hurtful. On the contrary it has been most helpful. But I have never carried the practice to an extreme. Half an hour a day on an average is the maximum time allotted to a communication with those on the other side. Nor have I ever permitted any of the Unseen to use my hand without my own consent or without Julia's assent. To have enjoyed such a friendship without interruption for so many years I count among the greatest privileges of my life.'

After another allusion to the 'comfort unspeakable' which he has derived from his talks with his dead son, Stead continues:

'But for this, I should never have persisted in a practice which has brought with it much material loss and no slight discredit. No one who knows anything of the prejudice that exists on the subject will deny that I have no personal interest to serve in taking up the exceedingly unpopular and much-ridiculed position of a believer in the reality of such communications. For years I have laboured under a serious disadvantage on this account in many ways, both private and public. My avowal of my conviction in this matter has been employed to discount and discredit everything I have done or said or written. But these disadvantages are as dust in the balance compared with the comfort and consolation I have derived from my communications with those on the other side.'

After this general confession of faith, Stead proceeds to give his reasons for believing that the 'intelligence' which moved his hand when the *Letters from Julia* were written could not possibly have been his own and must have been that of Julia Ames:

'Yet (he proceeds), while the source of these messages is a matter of the first importance in so far as they bear testimony to things not within human ken, the intrinsic value of three-fourths of the *Letters from Julia* is no more dependent upon theories as to their origin than the merits of Shakespeare's plays depend upon theories of their authorship. Grant, if you will, that the Letters were written solely by my unconscious self, that would in no way impair these eloquent and touching pleas for the Higher Life. I only wish my unconscious self could write so well.

'The most extraordinary thing about these Letters is the way in which they have been welcomed by men of all creeds and of none. Protestants and Catholics and Greek Orthodox have assured me that Julia has expressed the faith which they hold. Mrs. Besant told me that Julia must have been employed by one of the Masters to teach me the truths of Theosophy which I would not receive through any other channel. A Sikh professor assured me that with the exception of two immaterial points of detail, Julia's letters might be translated and circulated as an exact statement of the Sikh faith. The distinguished editor of the *Hindoo Spiritual Magazine* expressed his surprise that a Western writer should have been able to set forth so lucidly the essential truth of the Hindoo religion.'

These last two paragraphs call for consideration, but first it will be well – turning away from the printed book before us – to glance for a few moments at a very interesting document in Stead's own handwriting which has never seen the light.

II

SOME JULIA MESSAGES

One of the strangest items preserved among Stead's papers is a manuscript record of messages from Julia during the months August 1892–January 1893. This record was made in the November-December pages of a *Letts's Diary* for 1894 – a foolscap-sized volume. The handwriting is unmistakably Stead's own, but modified in a variety of ways. For the most part it is very scrawly and uneven and it is more of a back-hand than Stead wrote usually. Here and there the writing is almost normal. At other times it becomes quite wild and mad-looking and degenerates into meaningless or incomprehensible scribbles or flourishes. Had this MS. been begun in a Diary for 1892 and finished in one for 1893, one would assume it to be the original record of the messages. It has no appearance whatever of being a mere transcript. How came it into a Diary for 1894?

However that may be, it is certainly full of interest.

On the top of the first page is scrawled: 'August 9, 1892. N.G.B., W.T.S.' Underneath comes: 'Julia Ames.' Here are the two opening paragraphs:

'I will try but my life does not divide itself into days as yours does. So that it does not fall naturally into days.

'Yes, I think if I were to tell you my experiences on this side it would be better. No, not at all, for I will tell you much more than I tell Hoodie. You see you are to me now more than Hoodie or anyone else. You are the one chosen medium by whom I may communicate with the world of men.'

The entry for August 11 is of interest, especially if compared with the opening passages of the Letters in *After Death*:

'I want to tell you more about the experience I had when I passed over as this is quite different. I will tell you how I felt when I first saw my body lying in bed. I ought to have told you that when I found myself standing by the bedside, I was completely dressed. I did not recognize myself as being anything different from what I had always been. I felt just the same. I had on the same kind of clothes and was, so far as I could see, just the same – nothing was altered. My clothes were the old dress and underclothing I had always worn. The first thing that made me see that I was different was discovering my old body lying in the bed. It seemed so strange to see myself lying quite still and to know that I was not myself but only the cast-off chrysalis of my real self. When I looked at it as it lay there I felt somewhat sorry, for I had been in the old thing for nearly thirty years or more, and when you have worn a dress or a body so long you kind of feel attached to it. And there it lay quiet and silent and senseless, and I looked at it and wondered what would happen now I was outside of it. I was just a bit frightened, but I was consoled because everything seemed so familiar. It was just the same as it always was. But it was not till the door opened and Mrs. Willard entered and began to cry over my old body that I really began to realize that I was really what you call dead. And yet I was never more alive in my whole existence.'

The entry for August 23 ends in the mad kind of handwriting which I have described, the words 'No, No, No' and 'The Lord Liveth,' being in very large letters. The punctuation is exactly as given here:

'No you are not a weak miserable wretched creature you are a poor mean worm in yourself But you are the destined instrument of the truth and it will be mighty mightier far than you imagine Oh my dear dear dear friend how I envy you the opportunities you will have You will deliver mankind from the fear of death and bring them into the living presence of spirit. Yes that paper will be your throne the world will hear and listen and believe. My dear William Have you lost hold of the Hand of God? Julia Ames. No I will write no more today. NO, NO, NO, the Hand of God never leaves hold of you. Courage pray more. Read the Bible more and Remember THE LORD LIVETH Goodbye JULIA AMES'

The entire manuscript, if it fell into the hands of somebody who knew nothing of Stead and Julia and psychical occurrences in general, would be dismissed immediately as the product of a mind unhinged; but, apart from the erratic penmanship, it is not really so astonishing to anyone who has read either *After Death* or the letters which Stead wrote to his fellow Spiritualists during the last few years of his life. These particular messages from Julia seem to present merely a distorted dream-like reflection of the workings of Stead's own brain. They touch, as dreams do, upon most of the people and affairs to the fore in his life. Nearly a dozen of his women helpers and secretaries, for instance, are alluded to by name and their characters and capabilities commented upon. This one, Julia says, 'is too sharp with her tongue'; that one is in danger of becoming too fond of him: of them all, there is only one 'materializing medium' – only one, that is, with whom Julia feels she could 'materialize.' There is much talk of Miss Willard ('Minerva') and of Lady Henry Somerset. There are messages from the Prince Consort, who, in collaboration with John Brown,[1] is going to help Stead with a character sketch of Queen Victoria, on the express condition that nothing is printed 'to which Her Majesty may take exception'; from Parnell – an uncomplimentary remark about Mr. Healy; and from Tennyson. Stead's friend, Mr. M. H. Spielmann, Julia knows to be a bit of a sceptic in regard to her – she thinks, however, she can devise a test that will convince even him. There are a number of prophecies about matters concerning which Stead is anxious. Morley's majority at the forthcoming Newcastle election is to be 1,400; it turns out to be 1,700, but Julia is not put out of countenance by the slight discrepancy: 'this was due,' she explains, 'to the fact that more voted than I expected.' Most of the prophecies are with regard to Stead himself and of a cheerful description. He will found his paper, and it will be a great success. He will, moreover, become 'a wonderful clairvoyant.' Even those prophecies which would be discouraging to most men are of a kind which to Stead are welcome – in fact they but confirm premonitions long harboured almost gleefully. 'You will go to gaol at least twice,' Julia tells him; and she adds: 'You will probably be killed in a riot.'

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[1] Queen Victoria's Highland body-servant.

I have said that one of the messages was from Tennyson. This had reference to a matter to which Stead had given much attention and about which he had become quite excited – namely, a poem which some one using his hand had written out and which purported to be an unpublished poem of Tennyson's. According to Julia, Tennyson's own statement, as made through her to Stead, was as follows:

'My wife has read my poem. She has tried not to believe that it is mine, but my son Hallam has read it. He says it is a rough draft of a poem which I intended to write, but that it is due to my reputation to suppress it. My reputation! What is my reputation compared to the truth? I wish I had published it during my life. I wish you would not delay in writing about it to Swinburne. He is a judge. He would not resent your letter. Myers is an opinionated poetaster whose judgment is merely superficial. I think you will find that Morley and Meredith will think the poem is my own. I will write and tell you what to do when you see my son Hallam Tennyson.'

Presumably Stead had submitted the MS. of the poem to Mr. F. W. H. Myers, distinguished in the world of letters as in that of Psychical Research, and had been dissatisfied with his opinion. Among a number of other friends whom he consulted was E. T. Cook, whose reply dated June 2, 1893, is very interesting. Assuming, as he of course was perfectly willing to do, that the verses came into existence upon paper in the way attested, Cook was faced – so he said – with two alternatives: either Tennyson wrote them or Stead did. He proceeds:

> 'The former would be a miracle, the latter in accordance with known laws of unconscious cerebration. Therefore the evidence for the former must be overwhelming. But is it? Counsel for the miracle would have to make out that you were such an unpoetical fool that you couldn't have written them by any unconscious action of your brain. If I were on the Jury, knowing your versatility I should pay no attention to such an argument and should merely conclude that your extraordinarily reckless and sympathetic brain had broken out in a new place. I should support my conclusion by the internal evidence of the verses themselves. They are not good enough for Tennyson; though they are remarkable enough to be the first fruits of your latent powers in this new line.'

III

WHAT ARE WE TO THINK ABOUT IT ALL?

For the reader who hesitates to accept the *Letters from Julia* as a revelation, they have at least the interest of a mystery – a mystery which is not to be explained by any theory of coincidence or mere accident.

I am far too ill-versed in psychic matters to venture on any reflections of my own upon the general question, but there is one aspect of it which I may perhaps discuss without presumption – that question of Julia's superiority to Stead as a writer on which he himself provokes debate in the lines cited on page 330. Is it really to be admitted that Julia's 'eloquent and touching pleas for the Higher Life,' as Stead calls them, were beyond the reach of his own uninspired pen?

On this, the reader will form his own opinion. For my part, I cannot admit what Stead maintains. Most of Julia's pages convey but little to me and awake in me no feeling of admiration – no feeling of any kind except boredom or impatience; a few pages, here and there, strike me as a not very successful example of the kind of writing which has won so great a popularity for Mr. Ralph Waldo Trine, whose books, like these *Letters of Julia*, have an immense circle of readers outside the English-speaking world. On the other hand, when I do come upon something of Julia's which seems to me striking or stimulating I say to myself at once – How like old Stead! Among these, are the pages in which Julia discourses on the modernizing of the Rosary and those in which she suggests the founding of her Bureau.

The 'Companionship of the Rosary' must appeal, one imagines, to a wider audience than anything else in the book. Just at first, of course, the mere words, 'to modernize the Rosary,' grate upon the ear. All devout Catholics, and most reverers of tradition, are apt to be horrified by the notion of Stead and his 'spook' thus tampering with a rite so time-honoured and sacred, and I have no doubt that many must continue to view the proceeding with distaste and disapproval. But to others not thus inevitably prejudiced against it, there is something really beautiful in the method here suggested for keeping watch and ward over not our friends merely but also our enemies. The daily observation of this new Rosary of Stead's could not fail, surely, to be a most beneficent practice.[1]

It consists merely in preparing a list (1) of persons, (2) of causes, to whom and to which you are in some relation. 'Go through them all *seriatim* every morning before you begin your daily work, thinking – What can I do for this? What ought I to do? And when you finish, jot down for your guidance any suggestion that may have occurred to you.'[2]

Thousands must have hearkened to these words and profited by them. 'I am not an admirer of your Spooks,' one of Stead's most famous friends wrote to him on receiving a copy of the first edition of the Letters, 'but I am reluctantly obliged to admit that "Julia" has one good idea. The Rosary is excellent and I am going to adopt it and to make you a Companion of mine.'

This particular 'Companion' – Lord Milner – was likely to carry the idea out more thoroughly than Stead himself ever did. Stead was incorrigibly unmethodical. I have before me, as I write, the little 'Letter Register' book bound in red leather – a Christmas Present to him, probably from one of his children – in which he inscribed his own List. It begins elaborately enough, with a title-page, thus:

COMPANIONS OF MY ROSARY
Compiled, December 1897
W. T. Stead

---

[1] He thought of it himself first, in pre-Julia days, at Holloway Gaol.

[2] Stead, *After Death*, p. 202.

And on the page opposite Stead has written out carefully the names of his wife, his six children and his brothers and sisters. The names of thirty or forty other members of his family circle follow on the second and third pages. Next come Stead's friends from early childhood – some thirty of them; then seven old school-fellows; forty or fifty names chiefly masculine, connected with Newcastle and Howden; and, under the heading 'Girls, Howden,' a group of no fewer than thirty young women – Stead has the Christian names of all of them by heart!

The sections which follow were less easy to complete, Stead's circle having grown so swiftly and enormously. There are but few omissions, perhaps, from the *Northern Echo* group of a hundred or so, but when we reach the *Pall Mall* period it is obvious that Stead is losing breath a bit – the pace is getting too much for him; and a 'Miscellaneous Circle, 1880–1890,' which might well have filled a dozen pages occupies but two. However, a large proportion of the principal names are duly recorded; and, after all, in Stead's case a more comprehensive catalogue would have been excessive – he could not have said his Rosary for the beads. Even as things were, he gave far more time and thought to his fellow-men than, in the interests of his own worldly welfare, he could afford.

Julia's Bureau seems to me just as Stead-like as the 'Companionship of the Rosary,' and Julia's admonitions to Stead on the subject sound merely like the voice of conscience. 'Why is the Bureau I wrote to you about years ago not established?' we find her saying to him in September 1896. 'All because of one thing and one thing only. You have no time. That is to say, that all the time you have, you spend on this whirling, transitory life. It will not do. Your world will gain no glimpse of the other side, open we the chinks never so widely, when the whole day is spent in the desperate pursuit of an unceasing multitude of this world's affairs.' And there is nothing that is not entirely typical of the working of Stead's own mind in what she says to him on the subject three months later. 'When you have established the Bureau of which I have written to you so often, you will be pestered with many who will want to get into communication with those on the "other side" for no good purpose. The "Two Worlds" will help each other much. But they can also hinder much. And when the hindering exceeds the help, then the door is closed!'

It is in this letter that Julia describes to Stead the three classes of persons who are certain to seek to communicate, to their own hurt: those who have no self-reliance, the idly curious, and partners in sin.

'Then do you think we had better drop the idea?' Stead represents himself as asking.

Julia replies:

'My dear friend, what nonsense you talk! Do you propose to drop navigation because you hear of storms and rocks and quicksands? No! no! no! What is necessary is to recognize that the Borderland is as important (at least) to cross as the Atlantic, but that it is not any more safe. What you seem to forget is that the Bureau with all its risks, will do what is the most important thing of all. It will practically abolish the conception of death, which now prevails in the world. You have become mere materialists. We must break through the wall of matter which is stifling your souls. And the Bureau will make a way for the light from beyond to shine through.'[1]

Are not these the authentic accents of Stead himself?

However that may be, the entire story of Julia is of fascinating interest and should be examined in detail not only in *After Death* and in Miss Stead's Life of her father in which, writing as one who shares all his convictions unquestioningly, she gives special prominence to his psychic interests and pursuits, but also in Miss Edith Harper's *Stead the Man*, and in *Borderland*, the periodical in the editing of which Stead co-operated with his first psychical instructress, Miss Goodrich-Freer, during the years 1894–7.

Not feeling qualified myself to go more fully into these difficult matters, I shall close the present chapter with some very wise and thoughtful reflections upon this aspect of Stead's character written by one who knew him well, Mr. A. G. Gardiner. They are from a review of Miss Stead's book.[1]

---

[1] When, at last, in October 1908, Stead decided that Julia's Bureau must come into existence forthwith, he did so on Julia's assurance that the money required for it would be forthcoming 'from America.' And sure enough it did in the way Miss Stead describes in *My Father*. Stead's article, 'How I Know the Dead Return,' written in the following December and printed in the *New York American* (as well as in the *Fortnightly Review*) caught the attention of Mr. Hearst, the proprietor of that journal, and Mr. Hearst cabled on Christmas Eve asking him to become its Special Correspondent in London at £500 a year. 'I wonder if this is the money Julia means?' Stead remarked to his daughter, 'but we want £1,000 and this is only £500 – anyhow let's go double or quits!' And he replied that he would accept the post on condition he received £1,000 a year. Mr. Hearst agreed and Stead, who received the answering cablegram at Hayling Island, telegraphed at once triumphantly –

Estelle Stead,
5 Smith Square, Westminster.
Doxology Julia vindicated. American accepts.

'It must be admitted that Miss Stead is right in regarding her father's interest in Spiritualism as fundamental to an understanding of his motives and activities. All that he did had its roots in the visionary. Spiritualism, automatic writing, telepathy, spirit photography, and the rest belonged to his later life, but they were the inevitable developments of a mind whose allegiance was never to the five senses of the normal man, but always to some sixth sense that constituted for him the only valid governance of life. "Voices" and visions were the substantial realities of this phantasmal world. Had he lived in an earlier age he would have been the founder of a new religion or the furious Crusader on behalf of an old one. He would have been worshipped by crowds of disciples, and miracles and legends would have gathered round his name.

'It is not the purpose here, nor is it necessary, to discuss the merits of psychical phenomena. The sceptic, housed within his five senses, will never understand the visionary; but if he is wise he will leave room for potentialities that are hidden from him; he will admit that there may be a vision that transcends his material horizon and an audition that catches strains unheard by his ear. No doubt there is credulity and fraud. The ease with which fraud is practised, indeed, is one of the most serious obstacles with which the serious visionary has to deal. But, though Sludge the Medium no doubt deserved all Browning's anathemas, there are a thousand testimonies that cannot be dismissed with Sludge, and at the end of all the sceptic will find the large tolerance of Hamlet's phrase the truest wisdom. All that we are concerned with here is William Stead's sincerity. He believed with all his heart and brain. He would have joyfully gone to the stake for his belief. And what a figure of triumphant exaltation he would have made at the stake! What hymns and psalms and spiritual songs he would have sung! What speeches and prayers he would have uttered! But he was denied this splendid penalty. He had instead to pay a less heroic, but heavier price. He saw himself looked at askance

[1] *Review of Reviews* for October 1913.

by old friends, mocked at, and passed by. He bore it all with extraordinary cheerfulness and courage.'

After bearing witness to Stead's inexhaustible goodwill and complete freedom from personal animosity, Mr. Gardiner returns to the question of his 'eccentricity' and what it entailed for him:

'But the point here is that he knew all the time the price that he had to pay for what the world regarded as his eccentricity, and that he paid it willingly. He ignored personal consequences and never based his calculations on material loss or gain. He was a visionary from his cradle – a visionary with an overwhelming love of his fellow-men – and he had the visionary's recklessness and reliance upon emotion. "Great thoughts spring from the heart," says Vauvenargues, and Stead always relied upon the impulse of the heart. "I never ponder; when I do I go wrong," he said. This intensity of feeling was revealed in the boy. Miss Stead tells how as a child he sobbed himself to sleep at the thought of his lost condition, and how at school at Silcoates he shared in an extraordinary revival movement among the boys. He could date the moment of his boyish conversion, and his letter to his sister, pleading with her to "come to Jesus," would be difficult to rival in the religious experience of a child of thirteen. Long before he began his career as the "St. Paul of Spiritualism" he had become the subject of premonitions, spiritual intimations, impulses from without which were the governing influences of his actions. He always felt himself in the hands of invisible powers, an instrument whose task was ordained, a soldier who was moving on to serve in great fields of action where his *rôle* was fixed. When the premonition came to him at Darlington that he was going to London he communicated the fact to friends as he might have communicated the contents of a letter. The story, told in his own words, of how he was "warned" to be ready by a certain date to succeed Mr. Morley as editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, of how he communicated the fact to the proprietor and Mr. Morley, of the rather chill disdain with which the latter received the prophecy that he was going into Parliament, of the fulfilment of that prophecy through the sudden death of Ashton Dilke and Mr. Morley's election for Newcastle – all this shows the extent to which he was under the dominion of his supernatural counsellors and the candour with which he declared his faith. "No one," he said, "can have premonitions such as I have had without feeling that such premonitions are the only certainties of the future. They will be fulfilled, no matter how incredible they may appear; and amid the endless shifting circumstances of our life, these fixed points, towards which we are inevitably tending, help to give steadiness to a career and a feeling of security to which the majority of men are strangers." '

Having enlarged a little on the irresistible appeal made by Spiritualism to a mind 'so eager for visions, so anxious to bridge the gulf between the visible and the invisible,' and having recalled how Stead 'moved in a world where spiritual presences were more real than the figures he passed in the street,' Mr. Gardiner thus concludes his truly admirable appreciation:

'Whatever view we take of this phase of William Stead's life it would be foolish to attempt to divorce it from his general career – to treat it as an aberration from the main current of his character. It was as proper to him as his youthful agonies over his lost soul or his pleadings with his little sister. He was a spirit who refused to remain in the prison of the senses. The passion to penetrate the mysteries of the unseen sprang from the same qualities as those which made him the incomparable journalist. He was aflame with enthusiasm for humanity. The slow processes of reform made no appeal to his impatient spirit. He must have a consuming fire from heaven, though he had to storm the invisible and bring the divine flame himself. . . .

'There has never been in English journalism a more versatile or bewildering figure, or one that challenged the judgment of his fellows in so many ways. But to all of us, whatever our opinion of his opinions, he was the prince of our craft. We shall not look upon his like again. With all his very obvious defects, there was in him a certain greatness of spirit, a spaciousness of atmosphere, a universal benevolence that make him a noble memory. He did not belong to our narrow ways and our timid routines. The wide waters of the Atlantic are a fitting grave for his bones.'

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